



PWYLLGOR DIGIDOL, DATA AC ARLOESI
DIGITAL, DATA AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:	21 July 2026
TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:	University Partnership Update
CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:	Mr Mark Henwood, Executive Medical Director
SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:	Dr Leighton Phillips, Director of Research, Innovation, and Value

Pwrpas yr Adroddiad (dewiswch fel yn addas)

Purpose of the Report (select as appropriate)

Er Sicrwydd/For Assurance

ADRODDIAD SCAA
SBAR REPORT

Sefyllfa / Situation

To provide an update on university partnership activities following recent discussion at the Research and Innovation Sub Committee (R&ISC) meetings on 2 March and 8 June 2026. The Digital, Data and Innovation Committee (DDIC) last considered and received assurance from an update provided on 15 January 2026.

Cefndir / Background

To maintain its 'University Health Board' designation, Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDdUHB) is required to demonstrate continuous improvement in collaborative working with its university partners. University designation represents a commitment on behalf of HDdUHB to ensure that university activity is demonstrably improving the quality of care, improving patient outcomes, and enhancing the reputation of the Health Board to attract people to work in Wales.

On an annual basis, HDdUHB has historically been required by the Welsh Government to provide evidence of purposeful university partnership activity, with examples of how this is improving services and benefitting our population and to set out our plans for the next 12 months aligning to the Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP). The Welsh Government has not scrutinised this for several years, however, HDdUHB still values University Partnership and reports on progress through its governance arrangements.

There are three themes against which university partnership progress is assessed: Research and Development; Innovation; and Workforce, Training, and Education. Key criteria for each, as detailed within Memoranda of Understanding, are set out within Appendix 1.

Given the importance HDdUHB attaches to university status, partnership activities are reflected in its planning objectives, particularly those relating to research, innovation, and workforce, however, university partnership can be useful to advancing many of HDdUHB's ambitions, in areas including engineering, building design, law, management, and ecology.

The focus on the university partnership arrangements driven corporately is not to keep track of every area of activity being advanced between universities and the Health Board; rather, it is to ensure that a limited number of priorities receive the corporate focus and energy they deserve.

The R&ISC has received updates on University Partnership activities and received assurance on 2 March and 8 June 2026.

The update on 2 March 2026 highlighted the commitments set out in the Research and Innovation Strategic Plan (2025–2030) to strengthen alignment and reciprocity with university partners. This included refreshing collaboration agreements, enhancing partnership governance, and working towards a small number of shared, long-term research and innovation priorities with each higher education institution.

Members of the R&ISC were advised on the 2 March 2026 that new Memoranda of Understanding had been agreed with Aberystwyth University, Swansea University, and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) during 2025. These provide a broad framework for collaboration across research, innovation, education, and service improvement, with emerging areas of shared focus including the Social Model for Health and Wellbeing, innovation in sport and health, ethical AI, and strengthening regional research and innovation capacity.

The report also outlined that these priorities were being developed into structured work plans, supported through bilateral engagement with each partner, taking place in April and May 2026, alongside the continuation of a new whole-system approach, which brought all universities together for the first time in October 2025 to identify opportunities for collective collaboration.

The assessment section sets out the most recent update provided to the R&ISC on 8 June 2026. The R&ISC received assurance from the report, which has been updated to reflect the latest position.

Asesiad / Assessment

Meetings with Aberystwyth University and University of Wales Trinity St David took place on 17 April 2026 to start developing a structured work plan. Unfortunately, the Swansea University meeting was postponed due to operational pressures within the University and will now take place on Friday 10 July 2026. While it has not been possible to finalise plans with all three universities, good progress has been made, and formal agreements are expected to be in place by Quarter (Q) 2 2026/27.

All meetings to date have been Chaired by the Executive Medical Director of HDdUHB and the Pro Vice Chancellor or Faculty Dean of the University. The remainder of this report summarises the discussion and formative plans for Aberystwyth and UWTSD.

Aberystwyth University

The meeting was very well attended, reflecting strong interest across many parts of the university. The meeting had a particular emphasis on aligning strategic priorities, expanding collaborative research activity, and enhancing shared workforce development initiatives aligned to service delivery.

Discussions highlighted a strong track record of joint working, including collaborations in women's health, oncology, and biomarker development, alongside support from TriTech in technology development and commercialisation. Meeting attendees thought the partnership is

increasingly oriented towards shared strategic priorities, including rural health, the Social Model for Health and Wellbeing, food innovation, and digital and AI-enabled approaches to care. The meeting also reflected a shared ambition to deepen collaboration through joint grant activity, improved research infrastructure support, and closer alignment between academic research capabilities and health system needs, particularly in the context of prevention, primary care, and rural service delivery.

Several priorities will be further developed with Aberystwyth University over the next month, including:

- Strengthening joint research development and grant writing capabilities. Specific opportunities included exploring how research development capabilities could be 'pooled'. An aligned opportunity relating to digital was also raised, with an offer for HDdUHB to make greater use of research software engineering capacity and more integrated working between research development functions.
- Being purposeful around several priority research themes, including rural health, food systems and nutrition, the Social Model for Health and Wellbeing, digital and AI innovation, and improving access to research in rural communities.
- Enhancing the translation of research into practice, including development of research screening pathways, remote monitoring approaches, and prevention-focused interventions linked to primary care and population health.
- Strengthening links between research, education, and workforce development, including support for clinical academic pathways, healthcare support worker programmes, and new course development aligned to service needs.
- Building on existing collaboration through TriTech to support medical device development, biomarker commercialisation, and adoption of digital technologies within clinical services.
- Re-establishing the collaboration with the Centre for Rural Health and expanding work on community focused research and service models, including mental health, ageing, and chronic disease management.
- Exploring opportunities for shared use of equipment and facilities, as well as broader resource sharing to support collaborative research and service delivery (e.g. DEXA Scanner and gait analysis treadmill).

A follow up discussion on 30 June 2026 focussed on practical actions and next steps, though some areas progressed in advance of this date.

UWTSD

The UWTSD meeting was well attended by representatives from across the Institution, reflecting strong ongoing commitment to partnership. Discussions reflected a strong intent to move beyond broad collaboration into more structured, and delivery focused partnership arrangements, particularly in areas aligned to workforce transformation and community-based models of care.

Progress updates highlighted active collaboration in areas such as digital inclusion research, development of community health and wellbeing roles through the Centre for Social Innovation, and delivery of accredited professional training programmes. There was a lengthy discussion about further training and research in the field of motor development in children, where outcome data suggests significant improvements in several child development indicators. The discussion also reinforced a shared ambition to better align further education, higher education, and health system workforce needs into a more coherent pipeline, while recognising

that key elements of this alignment - including governance, funding models, and scalability - require further definition.

Several priorities will be further developed with UWTSD, including:

- Exploring how to formalise partnership delivery mechanisms. This could be through the development of a Service Level Agreement to support more responsive and scalable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and educational collaboration, moving the partnership towards clearer delivery arrangements.
- Refreshing the TriTech Institute collaboration in the context of the new Business Plan.
- Investigating further workforce and educational pathway opportunities. This could include progressing a more integrated pathway from further education through to workforce deployment, aligned to service needs. There was also a keenness to explore Band 2–4 workforce development models.
- Maximising the use of the Centre for Social Innovation to further develop community health and wellbeing roles, in the context of the recent business case and related opportunities in areas including arts and health.
- Exploring research, innovation and training opportunities linked to neurodiversity and early years development. This could include initiating joint work on neurodiversity, alongside scaling motor development training programmes aimed at improving early identification and reducing misdiagnosis in children.
- Expanding accredited professional training programmes and addressing access and cost barriers to ensure wider uptake across the health workforce.
- Further research into digital innovation and inclusion, including continuing collaboration on digital exclusion research, with outputs expected to inform Welsh Government policy.
- Exploring opportunities for infrastructure and place-based collaboration, including new facilities at Pentre Awel and Atriwm, and shared physical infrastructure to support integrated models of health, wellbeing, and activity services.

A follow up meeting took place on 15 May 2026, with a focus on practical next steps. The plans for 2026/27 include establishment of a Collaborative Board to identify and secure joint working opportunities between TriTech and the Assistive Technologies Innovation Centre (ATiC) initiative. In addition, focused work will be undertaken to understand the education and training requirement associated with the Community Health and Wellbeing Workers model being advanced by HDdUHB. While these will be the top priorities, work on other aspects of the partnership will continue.

Plans are advancing around a further pan university partner event, to also include SBUHB, in the Autumn.

A further update will be provided in Q4 2026/27.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

The Committee is asked to **RECEIVE ASSURANCE** from the report on progress in university partnership activities.

Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau)
Objectives: (must be completed)

Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor:

2.1.4 That the organisation is discharging its functions and meeting its responsibilities with regards to research

Committee ToR Reference:	and innovation activity carried out within the organisation.
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix, Teitl a Sgôr Risg Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	Not Applicable
Parthau Ansawdd: Domains of Quality Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	7. All apply
Galluogwyr Ansawdd: Enablers of Quality: Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	4. Learning, improvement and research
Amcanion Strategol y BIP: UHB Strategic Objectives:	All Strategic Objectives are applicable
Nodau Cynllunio 2026/27 Planning Goals 2026/27	All Planning Goals Apply
Hypergyswllt i Amcanion Llesiant HDdUHB 2026 Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives 2026	9. All HDdUHB Well-being Objectives apply
Model Cymdeithasol ar gyfer lechyd a Llesiant : (wedi'i gwblhau ar gyfer newid strategol a/neu newidiadau sylweddol i wasanaethau) A Social Model for Health and Wellbeing : (complete for strategic change and/or significant service changes)	7. All Apply

Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol: Further Information:	
Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	Not Applicable

Rhestr Termiau: Glossary of Terms:	Detailed within Report
Partïon / Pwyllgorau â ymgynhorwyd ymlaen llaw y Pwyllgor Digidol, Data ac Arloesi Parties / Committees consulted prior to Digital, Data and Innovation Committee:	R&ISC – 8 June 2026

Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)	
Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:	Not Applicable
Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:	Not Applicable
Gweithlu: Workforce:	Not Applicable
Tegwch Iechyd: Health Equity:	Not Applicable
Risg: Risk:	Not Applicable
Cyfreithiol: Legal:	Not Applicable
Enw Da: Reputational:	Not Applicable
Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:	Not Applicable
Cydraddoldeb: Equality:	Not Applicable

Appendix 1 – Potential Areas for Collaboration

Research and Development, with examples including:

- Use of specialist facilities
- Clinical and non-clinical trial sponsorship Collaborative research projects
- Developing and managing an active trial portfolio, spanning health and social care
- Knowledge mobilisation, including approaches to ensure research is leading to quantifiable impact Research income capture

Enterprise and Innovation, with examples including:

- University, Health Board, and Industry collaborations
- New device and technology development
- Managing joint innovation assets, through intellectual property and commercialisation Shared services
- Consultancy
- Innovation income capture, particularly taking advantage of post Brexit opportunities

Workforce, Education, and Training, with examples including:

- Managed placement activities in clinical and non-clinical settings
Honorary posts
- Fellowships and studentships
- Managed graduate and undergraduate training opportunities
- New educational programme developments
- Joint posts
- Continuing professional development
- Workforce planning and commissioning, linked to national processes, including those overseen by Health Education and Improvement Wales