



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

DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:	15 January 2026
TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:	Research & Development (R&D) Annual Framework Update
CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:	Mr Mark Henwood, Executive Medical Director
SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:	Leighton Phillips, Director of Research, Innovation & 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

An overview of annual progress against the national Health Care Research Wales (HCRW) research framework - Research matters – What excellence looks like in NHS Wales (hereinafter referred to as ‘the framework’. The Digital, Data and Innovation Committee (DDIC) are asked to take assurance from the progress update.

Cefndir / Background

The NHS Research and Development Framework, published in July 2023 by the Welsh Government and Health and Care Research Wales, sets out a clear vision for embedding research as a core function within health and social care services in Wales. It emphasises that research is not an optional activity and is instead a statutory duty under the Health and Social Care Act 2020. The framework aims to ensure that research drives evidence-based care, improves health outcomes, and reduces inequalities, positioning Wales as a globally recognised leader in health and care research.

The document highlights the importance of integrating research into everyday NHS service delivery. This means that health boards and trusts must treat research as a fundamental component of planning and quality improvement, rather than an add-on. Building capacity and capability is a central theme, with commitments to strengthen infrastructure, develop research careers, and enable staff participation. Public and patient involvement is also prioritised, ensuring that research is inclusive, transparent, and co-produced with communities.

Collaboration with partners such as the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), academia, and industry is encouraged to maximize impact and innovation. Governance and accountability are key elements of the framework. NHS organisations are expected to demonstrate leadership in research through board-level oversight, clear reporting mechanisms, and integration of research objectives into organisational strategies. The framework sets out expectations for monitoring performance and ensuring that resources are allocated to support research activity. Strategic priorities include fostering a culture of continuous improvement, leveraging digital innovation and secure data environments, and addressing health inequalities. The framework also draws lessons from the COVID-19

pandemic, where Wales delivered 125 studies and involved over 60,000 participants, showcasing the benefits of a strong research infrastructure.

For NHS organisations, the implications are significant. Health boards must embed research into service planning, support staff involvement, and align local strategies with national priorities. This requires active engagement with research networks, investment in workforce development, and commitment to governance standards. By doing so, HCRW and the Welsh Government state that organisations will not only meet statutory obligations, they will also contribute to improving patient outcomes and position Wales as a leader in health and care research.

The People, Organisational Development, and Culture Committee (PODCC) received an update on the framework on 17 August 2023 and were advised that the first review of Hywel Dda University Health Board's (HDdUHB's) adherence with the framework would be assessed at an annual review meeting on 17 October 2023. The R&ISC received a paper setting out HDdUHB's position on 11 September 2023. The assessment found the organisation to be in a strong position, with a number of the framework's key features already embedded through the 2021–2024 Research and Innovation Strategy. Governance, leadership, and partnership working were highlighted as particular strengths, and regular reporting mechanisms are in place to ensure ongoing compliance and improvement.

The assessment also identified areas for further development, notably the need to strengthen public engagement with the research strategy and to better integrate R&D into staff appraisal processes. These areas were reported as priorities for the coming year, especially as the organisation prepares to refresh its R&D strategy. Overall, the self-assessment reflects a culture of continuous improvement. While many framework features are well established, the report to R&ISC recognised that some aspects—such as fostering a culture of research excellence—are ongoing endeavours rather than endpoints. The R&ISC were advised that the findings would inform both the annual review with HCRW and the next phase of strategic planning for research and innovation within HDdUHB. The annual review went well and there has not been a subsequent review of progress against the framework.

With the new HDdUHB Research and Innovation Strategic Plan now in place, and significant progress made since the 2023 assessment, it was considered timely to assess the current position against the framework, in advance of future WG reviews.

Asesiad / Assessment

An assessment of performance against the framework pillars is provided at Appendix 1. In summary, it highlights that HDdUHB's new Research and Innovation Strategy (2025–2030) has been formally adopted, with clear alignment to national and UK-wide research priorities and is actively monitored through regular leadership meetings and governance structures. Research and Innovation (R&I) is fully integrated into the organisation's planning cycles and enjoys strong board-level commitment, with dedicated executive leadership and independent member champions ensuring research remains a strategic priority.

Partnership and collaboration are well established, with refreshed agreements in place with university partners and active engagement with public sector organisations, industry, and advisory boards. The Board has invested in research support infrastructure, including new clinical research facilities and enhanced digital collaboration, and continues to develop capacity through dedicated research support teams and ongoing staff development. Financial management is robust, with transparent reporting and successful efforts to secure both core and external funding, although challenges remain in fully covering core staffing costs.

Workforce development remains an ongoing area of focus, with efforts to attract, retain, and develop research-active staff, though the need to carve out more protected research time within job plans is acknowledged as a continuing challenge. Public involvement and participation are embedded at the study level, and the Board is working to further strengthen strategic engagement with communities. Communications and engagement activities have been expanded, leveraging both internal and national networks to raise the profile of R&I.

Finally, HDdUHB is committed to open access publishing, evidence-based practice, and ensuring that research informs service redesign and delivers societal value. While a number of framework pillars are well established, the assessment recognises that continuous improvement is needed—particularly in public engagement and workforce capacity—to fully realise the vision of research excellence across all aspects of health and care delivery. It should be noted that HDdUHB has been able to achieve this progress due to leveraging its TriTech and Innovation and Value Based Health Care (VBHC) divisions alongside R&D. There are restrictions to HCRW funding, which would make achieving the pillars of the framework challenging without being able to leverage these wider forms of support. With capacity restrictions it is also necessary to prioritise activities and full adherence to the pillars of the framework should be considered an ongoing endeavour rather than a one-off event.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

To **TAKE ASSURANCE** in the annual assessment of performance against the national Health Care Research Wales (HCRW) NHS framework.

Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau)

Objectives: (must be completed)

Committee ToR Reference: Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor:	2.1.4 That the organisation is discharging its functions and meeting its responsibilities with regards to research and innovation activity carried out within the organisation.
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix a Sgôr Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	N/A
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

Amcanion Cynllunio Planning Objectives	All Planning Objectives Apply
Amcanion Llesiant BIP: UHB Well-being Objectives: Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives Annual Report 2021-2022	9. All HDdUHB Well-being Objectives apply

Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol: Further Information:

Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	N/A
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&D Leadership Group

Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)

Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:	N/A
Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:	Detailed within report
Gweithlu: Workforce:	N/A
Risg: Risk:	N/A
Cyfreithiol: Legal:	N/A

Enw Da: Reputational:	No negative impact anticipated
Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:	N/A
Cydraddoldeb: Equality:	N/A