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

Consultation response

A Social Care Research and Development Strategy for Wales 2017-2022

Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
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Report on the consultation of the social care research and development strategy for Wales.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In June 2017, we published the draft social care research and development strategy for Wales 2017-2022 for consultation.

The strategy was developed in partnership by Social Care Wales, Health and Care Research Wales[1], the Wales School for Social Care Research[2] and a wide range of stakeholders to provide a coherent approach to improving social care research capacity and capability in Wales.

The strategy aims to deliver:

- A national co-ordinated approach to building social care research and development capacity

- A positive impact of research and development on social care policy, practice and improvement

- Strengthened links between social care research, social care policy, practice and improvement.

It aims to bring social care practice and research closer by sharing and agreeing actions, responsibilities and accountability. The strategy looks at five areas:

Focus area 1 – Involving the public in social care research

Focus area 2 – Research priorities

Focus area 3 – Use of existing and routinely collected data

Focus area 4 – Developing the workforce and organisations

Focus area 5 – Communication and use of research

The consultation feedback summary was also tabled at the Health and Care Research Wales Research and Development Group at its meeting in October. This group is comprised of key stakeholders and members of the Strategy Development Group responsible for drafting the strategy. The group agreed with the responses set out in this report to the comments received as part of the consultation.

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[1] https://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/
[2] https://www.healthandcareresearch.gov.wales/school-for-social-care-research-1/

1.2   Consultation and methodology

We published the strategy and consulted on it on behalf of all those who contributed. The consultation was open for eight weeks from 26 June to 21 August 2017, and a wide range of organisations from within and outside of Wales responded.

This was seen as a cross sector consultation and a valuable opportunity to understand whether the strategy was acceptable and reflected the social care research and development agenda in Wales.

We, as the body leading on taking the strategy forward, held overall responsibility for the consultation and collating responses. Network members shared and encouraged consultation as widely as possible amongst their workforce and other stakeholders.

The consultation consisted of two documents; a draft version of the social care research and development strategy for Wales 2017-2022 and a summary document. An on-line survey was issued on Survey Monkey to collect responses.

We asked respondents to comment on whether the:

- strategy addresses the main factors to improve the quality, quantity and use of social care research in Wales

- objectives set out under the five key focus areas, are appropriate and how well do they capture the progress needed in each area

- strategy requires any other key focus areas.

2. Findings following consultation

A total of 34 responses were received. The response was mainly positive, with many responses reflecting the need for such a document and welcoming its presentation.

Comments on the strategy

"We are pleased to see a national co-ordinated approach to building social care research and development capacity in Wales. We particularly welcome the emphasis upon research evidence playing a greater role in the organisation and delivery of social care, and in strengthening the links between social care research, social care policy and practice improvements."

"These (five focus areas) areas are sufficiently broad to capture all relevant objectives. However, precise objectives within each area should be flexible and responsive to internal and external emerging issues throughout the life of the strategy."

59% agreed that all or most of the factors that will improve the quality, quantity and use of research in Wales, was covered in the strategy. A further 41% agreed that some of these factors were covered in the strategy.

Following consultation, partners (Health and Care Research Wales and the Wales School for Social Care Research) agreed with the responses made by a large number of consultees that the strategy encourages working in partnership to build social care research and development capacity in Wales. It was felt more reference was needed towards the contribution third party organisations can make to help achieve this goal.

As noted above, the consultation responses will also be shared with the joint Health and Care Research Wales Social Care R&D Delivery Board/Social Care Wales Research Strategic Coordination Group.

The document is generally welcomed, the content and structure appropriate and the five focus areas as defined will achieve the aim for Wales to be internationally renowned for its excellent social care research. Most respondents agreed these reflected policy issues accurately, and noted:

"The five focus areas are correct for the five years of the strategy"

"The five main areas see to cover the key elements that are required from a social care research strategy and clearly mirror Social Care Wales' workforce priorities."

Each section gained a range of positive comments welcoming the strategy. Some issues, phrases and wording were commented on. Suggested improvements are noted in this report and will inform changes to the final version.

Whilst agreeing with the need for a national strategy, some respondents felt some matters were not addressed in enough detail. These were to do with how exactly the five focus areas would be achieved, or, the lack of implementation detail. These comments are informative and will be addressed as part of the development of the implementation plan.

3. Issues arising

Overall the response was positive but a number of themes emerged highlighting areas needing more development. The following are areas commented upon by a number of respondents, or, were identified by one respondent but highlighting an important issue.

3.1 The need for ring-fenced research funding for social care – as is the case with NHS

An issue raised by a number of respondents was the relative lack of ring-fenced funding for social care research, particularly in comparison with funding for NHS or wider health related research. Commentators stated that for the strategy to have a chance of being taken forward there needed to be dedicated social care research funding.

Such a need was identified for a number of areas such as support for higher qualifications through social care research to funding for specific social care projects, as well as the need for recognition of the costs of research to social care providers and commissioners and that such costs needed to be supported through a specific budget such as those available to NHS research.

One objective for the implementation plan is that Social Care Wales, Health and Care Research Wales and the Wales School of Social Care Research will undertake a joint review of the funding available to support social care research, identify where funding is required and develop an initial five-year plan to determine how funding can be increased.

3.2 The need to develop practitioner researchers in social care

A key theme in the strategy was the need to develop the capacity and opportunities available for social care practitioners to undertake research. This was heavily supported in comments while at the same time, obstacles to achieving such an aim was highlighted.

Comments focused on the lack of funding for practitioner research; the need for support and guidance when practitioners were starting research; workload pressures limiting time for research as well as the lack of employer support to enable practitioners to undertake research. In addition, it was emphasised that practitioner researchers needed to reflect a broader range of practitioners than just social workers with Occupational Therapists (OT) and the need for research in residential care being identified as specific examples. Many respondents also highlighted the importance of engagement with the independent sector.

The implementation plan will make specific reference to the potential routes to support practitioner research including the small grant scheme being developed by the Wales School for Social Care Research. It will also refer to the provision of advice and guidance to practitioner researchers and support being given by the Health and Care Research Support Unit. These roles are within the remit of the Wales School for Social Care Research, funded by Health and Care Research Wales.

The implementation plan will also seek to develop links between research undertaken as part of learning programmes such as CPEL for social workers and the learning and development framework for OTs. The Wales School for Social Care Research will also be seeking to support research in settings such as care homes and other care services through the newly established ENRICH network (Enabling Research in Care Homes) and My Home Life Cymru, both of which are hosted by the School and the Centre for Dementia and Ageing Research (CADR) and Centre for Innovative Ageing. Further emphasis on knowledge and skills in research will be included in qualification development and training programmes.

3.3 Wider representation was repeatedly requested for the strategy development group

A number of comments were made about the need to widen involvement in the development of the research and development (R & D) strategy both in terms of sectors but also professional groups. The Strategy Development Group sought to include the key groups of practitioner, providers, commissioners and regulators and academic staff in the development of the strategy. However, in the development of the implementation plan there will be more opportunities for wider involvement strengthening representation from the third sector, commissioners, local authorities, and members of the public.

The plan will focus on the five areas identified in the strategy and the recommended objectives. It is anticipated each area will involve a workstream with opportunities for wider involvement. The eventual aim is to develop a broad ranging community of interest in research and development which will reflect the geography, issues and groups involved in social care across Wales. Consideration is being given to how such a community or communities of interest can best be established and supported. It is noted that a number of partners are also actively engaged in these processes which will be further developed and extended in collaboration with Social Care Wales.

3.4 Need to emphasise the importance of inclusivity and involvement in research

Inclusivity in the research and development process was an important principle of the strategy so that the widest sense of ownership of research and the use of research findings can be developed. Comments supported such a principle and urged for a highest possible degree of inclusivity. This principle needs to apply to the range of activities involved in research including in research priority setting. The need to involve the breadth of interests was further highlighted including the active involvement of individuals receiving care and support, carers, children and young people and practitioners.

Work has already begun with Health and Care Research Wales to see how meaningful public involvement can be achieved and sustained in social care related research. There are also plans to build on the experience of research centers such as CASCADE at Cardiff University who have involved children who are looked after in the research process. These actions will be detailed in the implementation plan.

3.5 Need to collaborate/coordinate with a wider range of other organisations

A recurrent theme in the responses was the need to work with a wider range of organisations in developing the R&D agenda in Wales. Full involvement of the third sector was frequently mentioned with organisations such as the NSPCC wanting to be more involved. In addition, a response from the Economic and Social Research Council expressed a wish for their involvement in the research agenda in Wales.

All of these comments can be seen as a very positive response to the ideas presented in the strategy and the over-riding view expressed was for more involvement by a broad range of groups from practitioners, senior managers, members of the public including those using social care services. Another emerging theme was the wish for more detail on how the strategy was to be implemented. The strategy was viewed as a broad framework setting out a direction of travel. Now there is broad support for that direction, the next stage will be adding the detail of how the strategy will be taken forward and considering how the breadth of interest reflected in comments can be brought into the next stages.

4. Next steps

As well as prepare an implementation plan with detailed actions, we propose the following steps are taken to move the strategy forward. We suggest a partner leads on co-coordinating the work on each focus area.

4.1   Minor changes to the strategy

Minor changes will be made to phrases and wording where improvements were suggested.

4.2   Focus area 1 - Involving the public in social care research

Health and Care Research Wales supports and enables the involvement of the public, including individuals who receive services and carers in social care research through the Involving People Network (IPN) and the Health and Care Research Wales Public Involvement Delivery Board. IPN members were part of the group who developed this strategy. A priority for Health and Care Research Wales, as part of their strategic plan and through the review of the Involving People Network, is to facilitate and enable wider public involvement in all appropriate areas of social care and health research.

4.2.1   Implementation plan development

Health and Social Care Research Wales will lead on this focus area using an inclusive development process.

4.3   Focus area 2 - Research priorities

In establishing Social Care Wales the Minister for Health and Social Services agreed we should focus on three strategic priorities:

- Care and support at home
- Looked after children, and
- Dementia

Other areas will also be considered as part of setting research priorities. Within these priority areas we will identify; work completed, research capacity and capability and new programmes of research needed. The main aim of establishing research priorities will be to identify mechanisms by which the meaningful involvement of the breadth of interest in social care can be brought into this process.

4.3.1 Implementation plan development

We propose to lead on establishing priorities for research. To do this we will set-up a sub group representing a wide range of interests. We will look at new ways of working to enable a wide range of interests to be involved and help identify priority areas.

The sub-group is made up of representatives from Social Care Wales, Health and Research Wales, Wales School for Social Care Research and the public. It has been tasked with the role of developing the implementation plan that will set out targets and recommend mechanism for setting research prioritisation, including deciding how resources will be allocated against priority research areas.

4.4 Focus area 3 - Use of existing and routinely collected data

We are developing a National Social Care Data Set for Wales. This will hold data on the supply and demand of care and support services in Wales. We will work with Data Unit Wales and others to agree on the data to include, where and how this data will be collated and how the data set can be used and accessed by others. An initial data set is expected to be published in spring 2018. The Wales School for Social Care Research will be involved in this work.

Critical to the successful development of the data set will be the link between service delivery and outcomes. There are potential benefits from working closely with The Secure Anonymised Information Linkage Database (SAIL) to link data on social care outcomes to understand the delivery of care and support services in Wales. We want to work with SAIL to investigate what information on individuals care and support needs can be supplied on to feed in to the Data Set and support future research work.

4.4.1 Implementation plan development

We will set-up a group to advise on the development of the National Data Set, to decide on what further data is to be added and to monitor the development and use of the data set.

4.5 Focus area 4 - Developing the workforce and organisations

This focus area will be critical in implementing the strategy. It will need to focus on giving practitioners and others the skills, time, and resources needed to undertake and use research findings as well as developing a strengthened academic researcher workforce. There will also be a need to support the development of research minded cultures within social care organisations. Local, regional and national infrastructure needs to be developed to create a research and development community. This will need to span education and practice as well as the recipients of care and support, including giving access to evidence based resources to members of the public.

4.5.1 Implementation plan development

It is proposed that the Wales School for Social Care Research leads on developing the implementation plan as it is funded with this remit in supporting practitioners and others to develop research skills. Such a development will need to involve all key partners in the development of the R & D strategy. The Health and Care Research Wales Support Unit also has a remit to support researchers in planning and execution of research projects. We, within our service improvement role have a contribution to make in encouraging social care organisations to identify and implement models of care based on the best available evidence. Critical to success will be bringing these resources and interests together into a coherent support framework, building on work already initiated by the Wales School for Social Care Research.

4.6 Focus area 5 - Communicating and using research

We will work closely with the Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE) to develop a Welsh Social Care Online resource for Wales, hosted on our website. This will be a useful resource to host and communicate outputs from research work. This will also allow links between other areas of work, including workforce development and service improvements, allowing practitioners access to up-to-date resources and outputs from research work.

We would also like to use existing networking groups, such DEEP[3] and My Home Life Cymru[4] which are well established networks offering advice and support on better ways of working to meet the needs of people receiving care and support.

Other networks including CASCADE Voices[5]; a group of care-experienced young people who advise on research projects and ExChange[6] by Cardiff University; an all Wales social care organization that enables practitioners, service users and researches to share expertise and experience. We link with these networks to make sure the strategy's vision is achieved and its output valued. We will also work with other regulators and professional bodies, including the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW) and the Association of Directors of Social Services Cymru (ADSS) to ensure information and good practice on new service models is made available.

4.6.1 Implementation plan development

We will lead on the development of this area of the implementation plan.

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[3] http://dementiavoices.org.uk/
[4] http://myhomelife.org.uk/
[5] http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/cascade/people/young-peoples-advisory-group/
[6] http://www.exchangewales.org/

5. Conclusion

We propose a final strategy is published early in 2018 with an implementation plan authored by the organisations who developed the strategy. Both will reflect the views and suggestions of organisations who responded to the consultation, as noted in this report.

The final strategy will be launched in February 2018 and will be implemented from 2018-19 onwards.