



Ymchwil Iechyd
a Gofal Cymru
Health and Care
Research Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Swansea Bay University Health Board

11 March 2025

Dear Richard and Steve,

Thank you for meeting with me and my colleagues from Health and Care Research Wales to discuss progress relating to the implementation of the NHS R&D Framework, to share challenges and identify actions that need to be taken to improve health and care research across Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) and discuss where the wider Health and Care Research Wales system can help.

The presentation and copy of your draft 'Research, Development and Innovation' Strategy provided a very helpful overview and sets out clearly your direction of travel.

During the meeting, we noted and were particularly interested to hear of:

- Plans to develop a longer-term regional R&D strategy with HDUHB, to support the services and patients which are managed across the boundaries and that a joint review on research between the two organisations is planned.
- The establishment of a Digital, Data, Research and Innovation Committee which will receive regular progress and performance reports relating to the strategy and wider research and innovation programmes of work.
- The success of the first Swansea Bay R&D Day in September 2024, and how this has raised the profile of R&D across the organisation and provided inspiration for the therapists and healthcare scientists to hold their own R&D event.
- How the Health Board is developing its staff, and the work undertaken with nurses and medical students before they are qualified to raise the profile of research via a shadowing programme and future plans to replicate this with new cohorts.
- A dedicated clinical space now being utilised at Singleton Hospital for oncology and haematology studies.
- The appointment of a part-time clinical trials pharmacist at Singleton Hospital using commercial trial income and plans to increase capacity further by VPAG Stream 2 funding (subject to consideration by the Pharmacy Task Force).
- Exciting opportunities on the horizon relating to imaging, the appointment of a radiographer now under the portfolio of R&D and the links being established as part of the Swansea Bay campus project with sports sciences colleagues.



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- The cancer services pathways project, working with HDUHB to explore the development of a regional approach to improving access to research studies, for cancer patients from Southwest Wales.
- A new joint clinical academic appointment in SAIL (a joint appointment of a consultant oncologist between SBUHB, Swansea University and the Wales Cancer Research Centre) to explore the potential of the SAIL data to assist in developing cancer treatments and improving outcomes - potentially the first in the UK.
- The interface and strong partnership working with Swansea University and plans to revisit the MOU with Swansea University to ensure the Health Board has more traction and sound financial controls in place.
- The development of a policy for undertaking advanced therapies within the Health Board for genetic advanced therapies, which is being considered as part of the infrastructure development on the Morriston site, and that the R&D team are proactive in reviewing the pipeline of potential studies as well as linking into colleagues at Swansea University.

In terms of challenges:

- We noted the financial challenges being faced within academia, and you advised that you are closely engaged with the university developments particularly in relation to the Voluntary Early Release Scheme. This will have an impact on the number of clinical academics being jointly funded in the short to medium term by the University, and future posts will be a strategic decision for the Health Board. We acknowledged that the Health Board has historically met the full costs of clinical academic posts which is unusual but also reflected on the general challenges of joint funding such posts - an issue UK wide. The HCRW led NHS Embedding Research Programme's national project to identify and support clinical academics in Wales will lead to the development and adoption of national guidelines for NHS Wales and higher education institutions for hosting and supporting clinical academics. We also advised that following recent UK reports, UK wide implementation plans may emerge to address the decline.
- We discussed the role of the Joint Clinical Research Facility (JCRF) and the ongoing complexities of how it is perceived as part of the Commercial Research Delivery Wales offer. We queried if it provides a service as a standalone unit to the NHS, clinicians, and the Swansea Bay R&D team, or is it integrated, with studies being directed to the unit by Swansea Bay R&D. You confirmed the JCRF is integrated, a member of the Joint Study Review Committee (JSRC) with Swansea University and there is a close working relationship between the health board and the University. You also confirmed that the JCRF is part of the NHS delivery infrastructure. You expect JCRF to adhere to the Welsh Government research delivery funding terms and conditions as outlined in the Grant Award Letter and attend Research Delivery Operational Group and other 1-1 meetings in the same way as the non-JCRF delivery infrastructure does. You also noted that your relationship with the JCRF will be clarified in a review of the governance structures supporting R&D going forward.
- You further noted that JCRF staff are now employed by Swansea University and there has been difficulties in recruiting staff recently because of the disparity with the NHS pay awards. You indicated there has been discussion about transferring JCRF staff back into the NHS, which could be an opportunity for enhanced integration across delivery teams.

There are a few areas where we think SBUHB should consider following the meeting:

- Alignment of the RD & I Strategy with the NHS R&D Framework and Embedding Research Programme – We were encouraged from the discussion that the Research, Development and Innovation Strategy was aligned to most of the pillars in the NHS R&D Framework and the four national projects being taking forward via the national Embedding Research in the NHS programme. We noted that the strategy itself could be more explicit in relation to how it links with the implementation of the framework, and we discussed that you undertake an exercise to read across the actions in the strategy with the framework to explicitly highlight the alignment and identify gaps. We would welcome SBUHB's contribution to the embedding programme's projects, including identifying case studies for the project on measuring the economic value of research. You noted that you were considering establishing a more formal mechanism (a group) that sits below the Digital, Data, Research, and Innovation Committee which would be helpful in driving forward implementation and monitoring of the Framework's implementation.
- Roles and expectations of the HCRW Faculty and NHS organisations – In our discussions around developing NHS researchers, you noted your support for researchers, by signposting to the Faculty team and encouraging attendance at Faculty workshops. We also recognised that there was potential confusion in the roles/remits of the HCRW Faculty and NHS organisations, in signposting and supporting researchers. It was recognised that SBUHB has a close relationship with the HCRW Faculty Research Development Advisor in their region, whose role includes providing support to researchers in identifying the most appropriate Faculty scheme for them. You agreed to invite the Faculty team to present to your R&D Senior Management Team to give an overview of how it operates and how it can best support SBUHB moving forward.
- Strengthen links between HRCW, SBUHB and the Joint Clinical Research Facility (JCRF) – We discussed the need to have a common narrative on the JCRF's position within the NHS Wales research delivery infrastructure, for both commercial and non-commercial research, so that there is alignment and consensus in how this is reflected to sponsors and wider industry community. As noted above, your position is that the JCRF is fully integrated into the NHS research delivery environment, and to ensure there is a greater commonality in ways of working and for SBUHB's delivery leads to achieve this, and we will include JCRF in One Wales discussions. We recognised that JCRF were high performing and HCRW would like to ensure their role can be maximised to support the commercial research delivery agenda in Wales.
- Note the letter from Judith Paget and Suzanne Rankin. We have attached the letter on the Embedding Research in the NHS Programme which you received in February for ease so that you can consider this when progressing developments over the year.

We highlighted that the Research Delivery Funding Stream within Welsh Government could be selected for an internal audit in the forthcoming financial year, therefore work will be undertaken to ensure NHS organisations are compliant with the terms and conditions set out in the Research Delivery Funding Grant Award Letter.

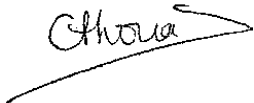
Regarding the requirement to publish a public facing R&D annual report by June 2025 (2024/25 financial year), you noted that you'd welcome a template therefore we confirmed that we will explore developing guidance for this. You also shared your previous annual report with us for use as an exemplar. Our CE&I team will contact you shortly about the template for a public facing R&D report.

We also advised that a series of cancer research delivery metrics are being developed as part of the ministerially led Tackling Cancer Through Research initiative and NHS organisations will be expected to report against these. To test the integrity of the metrics, all NHS Wales organisations will shadow report for one year (from 1 April 2025). Technical work is underway to explore how to capture patient referral data across NHS organisations. It is anticipated that the metrics will be published in the 2026/27 planning framework and associated delivery framework.

We highlighted that a self-assessment against the R&D Framework will be requested in readiness for the next annual review meeting likely to be held in March 2026.

Finally, we would like to thank you for a positive meeting. Please continue to keep up the good work on supporting and delivering health and care research and supporting your staff. We look forward to working with you further to maximise research opportunities in Swansea Bay UHB.

Best wishes



Carys Thomas

Joint Head of Research and Development Division, Welsh Government
 Joint Director of Health and Care Research Wales

Attendees	
Professor Steve Bain	Assistant Medical Director, R&D, Swansea Bay UHB
Richard Evans	Executive Medical Director, Swansea Bay UHB
Jemma Rogers	R&D Manager, Swansea Bay UHB
Mark Simpson	R&D Finance Manager, Swansea Bay UHB
Jayne Caparros	Research Delivery Manager, Swansea Bay UHB
Carys Thomas	Head of R&D Policy, Research and Development Division, Welsh Government
Violina Sarma	Head of NHS & Social Care Research Environment, Research and Development Division, Welsh Government
Claire Bond	Senior Manager, NHS R&D Funding and Performance, Research and Development Division, Welsh Government
Nicola Williams	National Director of Support and Delivery, Health and Care Research Wales
Helen Grindell	Head of Research Support & Operations, Health and Care Research Wales