



# Healthcare Technology Centre (HTC)

## Health and Social Care Research, Innovation and Improvement Landscape

July 2022 **Summary Report**

# Executive Summary

The Health and Social Care sectors in Wales play a critical role in not only improving and sustaining population health and wellbeing, but also influencing wider determinants of wellness such as employment, education, housing, social inequality and economic growth. However, changing demographic needs, increasing demand, and heightened patient and public expectations have placed sustained pressures on health and care services throughout Wales (Bevan Commission, 2016). Accordingly, the Parliamentary Review on Health and Social Care (PRHSCW, 2018) determined the current model of health and social care service delivery in Wales to be unsustainable and detailed a need for wide-scale transformational approaches to be implemented at significant pace and scale. Specifically, the Parliamentary Review outlined an urgent and decisive need for wide-scale service transformation, underpinned by the development of new models and approaches to service delivery, driven by evidence-based research, innovation, improvement related activities.

To support this ambition and develop a more joined up approach to Health and Social Care related RII activity across Wales, the Welsh Government's (2018) 'A Healthier Wales' long-term strategy for health and social care mandated the 'establishment of a nationally co-ordinated network of hubs which bring together research, innovation and improvement activity within each Regional Partnership Board (RPB) footprint'. With this, Regional Innovation Co-ordination (RIC) Hubs have been established, and deriving an evidence based strategy is now imperative in ensuring the hubs are able to maximise impact while making effective use of resources. A key aspect in facilitating this activity is gaining a comprehensive understanding of the current Health and Social Care RII landscape and related dynamics at a regional and national level. This will support the identification of regional and national strengths and weaknesses, provide transparency, and highlight areas of good practice and for potential replication. Such insight could then be used to inform the development of a place-based strategy and support targeted evidence based interventions, alongside promoting the wider adoption and spread of good practice.



In line with this, the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board, supported by funding from the Welsh Government, commissioned the Healthcare Technology Centre (HTC) at Swansea University to conduct a mapping project to summarise the region's rich health and social care Research Innovation and Improvement (RII) landscape. The aim here was to provide a key resource through which regional stakeholders may be able to better understand the unique health and social care terrain of Cardiff and Vale, while also establishing an evidence-base to further inform the evolving strategy of the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub going forward.

The team at the HTC dedicated several months to undertaking both desk-based and primary research to facilitate this, and produced an extensive report to detail all known health and social care RII assets and operations ongoing across the region. Desk-based research hereby spanned primary and community care, secondary care, social care, academia and the third sector; with examples of RII activities from across each domain being detailed.

Primary research was also conducted with key regional stakeholders to provide an evidence-base for the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub's evolving strategy going forward. Stakeholders from across these regions engaged in surveys and semi-structured interviews to share insights on RII efforts activities ongoing within their department. Stakeholder engagement helped to identify potential roles and responsibilities that their respective RIC Hub might fulfil to facilitate improvement and innovation across Cardiff and Vale health and social care; while stakeholder insights on enablers and barriers to RII were used to highlight opportunities for RII development.

This summary report provides a brief overview of the key findings from this collaborative endeavour, with qualitative findings detailed from **page 3** of this report. Prior to this, a brief summative evaluation of the RII landscape of Cardiff and Vale is presented overleaf.

# RII Landscape Across Cardiff and Vale: Primary and Community Care

Our findings highlight the strength of collaboration and cluster activities in Cardiff and Vale's Primary and Community Care services, with Primary Care clusters demonstrating the region's ability to collaborate with key stakeholders. Despite this, opportunities for further development remain. The Primary Care Services review recommends implementing 'locum cluster lead' jobs and improving procurement and evaluation of nuanced working techniques to assist existing clusters.

## Academic Partners

Academic institutions in Cardiff and Vale (including Cardiff University and University of South Wales) demonstrate leading RII activity and expertise across a broad spectrum of domains related to health and social care. Areas of strength hereby include (but are not limited to) developments in research on various non-communicable diseases which place great burden on individuals, societies and healthcare systems across Wales; including cancer, dementia and neurodegeneration, renal disorders, respiratory disorders, and neurological disorders. These academic partners are involved in various health and social care RII support programmes, including the Centre for Innovation Ageing (CIA), the Cerebra Innovation Centre (CIC), the Institute of Management and Health, the Wales School for Social Care Research (WSSCR), the Wales Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research (PRIME Centre Wales), and the Assistive Technologies Innovation Centre (ATIC).



## Other Health Board RII Activity

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board (CVUHB) helps to excel the RII landscape for the region, with it demonstrating a commitment to supporting the delivery and dissemination of research. In fact, CVUHB's research capacity beats all other Welsh regions, with 17,745 scholarly papers being published at the time of writing. In addition to this, secondary and tertiary care services provided by CVUHB offers huge potential for enhancing primary and community care in Cardiff and Vale and beyond; as demonstrated through the 'All Wales NHS COVID-19 Innovation and Transformation Study' and the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) partnership. CVUHB's research capacity beats all other Welsh regions.

## Third Sector

Third sector organisations within Cardiff & Vale comprise an active and diverse part of the health and social care RII ecosystem; with activities in this region being supported by the Cardiff Third Sector Council and Glamorgan Voluntary Services through the likes of transformation programmes and the Integrated Care Fund (ICF). Various third sector organisations have hereby supported the implementation of several health and care services across the region, including mental health and disability support, while also supporting key research in topics such as cancer. Alongside core activities, Cardiff and Vale third sector organisations are also active in Health and Social Care related RII initiatives, such as the creation of novel community services and new programmes to assist safe hospital discharge. Overall, the third sector represents an essential stakeholder in RII operations across Cardiff and Vale, though there remains scope for increased collaboration and involvement.

## Primary Data Findings: Barriers and Enablers to Health and Social Care RII in Cardiff and Vale

In order to better understand the health and social care RII ecosystem in Cardiff and Vale, qualitative methods were used to explore stakeholder perceptions of barriers and enablers that either facilitate or restrict RII in the region.

In terms of the enablers of RII activities, engagement with stakeholders highlighted various factors or characteristics that facilitate the existence and/or perceived success of health and social care RII initiatives. Firstly, organisational culture transformation was found to be the top most reported enabler of RII activities and capabilities. Having a supportive organisational culture is considered a critical factor in the pursuit of RII activities as it influences the degree to which creativity and innovation are stimulated in an organisation. The fact that this was highlighted as the top enabler of RII by health and care stakeholders demonstrates Cardiff and Vale RII's proactive approach to supporting RII across the region. However, while having a supportive organisational culture was highlighted as the top enabler for RII activity by Cardiff and Vale stakeholders, the existence of an organisational culture that is not supportive of innovation was also highlighted as a barrier to said activities. This indicates that while the Cardiff and Vale RPB is doing well to foster creativity and innovation in the workplace, more efforts are needed to embed good RII practices across health and social care departments and make RII-supportive ideologies the norm.



The top most reported barrier to RII activities identified by Cardiff and Vale stakeholders included a lack of resources, particularly in terms of limited funding and restricted staff time. Resource difficulties in this regard were reportedly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which increased staff workload and thus restricted the capacity of health and care stakeholders to engage in RII activities. This highlights a need to implement strategies for better supporting healthcare stakeholders in emergence from the pandemic, such that focus can be better directed towards RII activities going forward.

While the COVID-19 pandemic understandably restricted the potential for RII across the region, it was also found to facilitate RII in various ways. Changes subsequent to the COVID-19 pandemic were noted as facilitators, with data pointing to greater simplification of services and procedures and more effective collaboration between employees working in different health and social care settings. These factors contrast to pernicious barriers known to restrict RII potential, including the existence of ineffective and laborious processes and poor communication lines. Interestingly, The COVID-19 pandemic reportedly improved health and social care in some regards by streamlining inventive capacity and accelerating problem-solving. Post-pandemic, these process improvements should be maintained, analysed, and perhaps expanded.

Overall, the enablers and barriers identified by stakeholders from various health and social care departments across CVUHB offer valuable insight into the RII ecosystem across the region, highlighting various means through which innovation and improvement might be achieved.



## The Role of the Regional Innovation Co-ordination (RIC) Hub

This evaluative report emphasises the importance of contributions made by the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub in enabling a more integrated and coherent approach to health and social care RII activities across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. This is key to the development of a more effective health and social care RII ecosystem in terms of reducing regional duplication and thus wasted resources.

Interview and survey data outline the roles that stakeholders believe the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub might assume in order to optimise RII initiatives and add further value to the RII ecosystem across the region. Overall, stakeholders emphasised the need for the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub to act as a 'one-stop shop' for all RII activity across health and social care in Wales, offering a constant point of contact for organisations to connect with national innovation and industry engagement initiatives/networks. Stakeholders noted the potential for the RIC Hub to promote communication across primary, secondary, and social care boundaries, to support prevention-based practices and welfare through strong regional and local networks. Stakeholders indicated that the RIC Hub's mission may be to identify good practice in the Cardiff and Vale region and in other countries and regions so that promising RII activity can be upscaled and extended within and between regions. Stakeholders indicated that the RIC Hub might also better identify, review, and communicate the adoption of national findings and recommendations. Finally, regional stakeholders indicated that the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub might give extra signposting support, provide forums to debate innovative ways of working, share RII expertise, disseminate regional RII activities and success stories, and increase interdisciplinary collaborative engagement. Each of these actions and recommendations provide clear directives for how the RIC Hub might better focus their efforts relevant to the needs of the Cardiff and Vale landscape going forward,



## Health and Social Care Related RII Priorities in Cardiff and Vale

In addition to exploring stakeholder perceptions about the potential role and responsibilities the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub might assume to support RII activities across the region, surveys and interviews also sought to identify areas across the health and social care ecosystem most in need of RII efforts and initiatives. The data revealed six key areas in need of greater RII activity. Although each of these areas were identified as in need of prioritisation in their own right, some areas achieved a greater consensus across the data set. As such, the six key areas for prioritisation are presented below, with these being ordered from highest to lowest in terms of the number of times they were identified by stakeholders to be areas in need of RII prioritisation.

- Mental health services
- Cross-border collaboration
- Social care
- Social prescribing
- Healthy resilient communities
- Digital systems and the use of digital technology

Strategically focusing RII efforts in these areas may thus function to enhance the health and social care ecosystem across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

## Emerging Opportunities

In consideration of the insights provided by regional stakeholders, a summary of emerging opportunities that the RIC Hub might explore to improve RII operations across the region are presented below.

- Bring together partners and create a forum to promote efficient communication and collaboration to drive RII
- Engage with regional skills development programmes such as Intensive Learning Academies and include RII training modules in workforce training programmes
- Work with partners to define an 'end-to-end system of RII support' across health and social care
- Develop RII infrastructure in Local Authority and social care by establishing leadership roles and structures
- Develop a cross-sectoral database for RII knowledge management, allowing partners to easily report and collaborate in RII activities across the region



## Key Research Findings

The findings produced by the evaluative report highlight a very active, rich and diverse but highly complex health and social care RII landscape across Cardiff and Vale, with this being consistent with other Welsh regions. Positively, the health and social care RII assets and activities reviewed in the full research report imply that Cardiff and Vale is well-positioned to contribute to the Welsh Government's A Healthier Wales (2018) initiative. In accordance with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, the various examples of collaboration between academia, Government agencies, and the NHS demonstrated in the full report highlight the benefits of working together to improve the region's capacity to support the health and wellbeing of Welsh populations.

One area in which Cardiff and Vale appears to excel in is that of research, with there being particularly good regional capacity across academia. Data synthesis revealed prolific research efforts and innovation being conducted in chronic condition care and prevention spanning cancer to neurological and renal disorders. Academic partners contribute to regional RII activity and have world-leading knowledge in health, and findings show that significant regional focus and support is given towards medical and healthcare RII. While this is beneficial in terms of improving healthcare, this could threaten similar urgency and tactics to promote RII activity in social care areas. Opportunities exist to increase social care and health innovation in care homes, mental health, and for young people so that providers and users can co-create solutions. In regards to the capacity of RII initiatives and activities to contribute to this, greater coordination and visibility of regional RII assets and related activities, together with enhanced stakeholder support and training, might better enable the RIC Hub to maximise RII potential across the region.

A full outline of key opportunities are presented below.

- Findings urge more communication, involvement, and integrated working between all partners across the Cardiff and Vale health and social care ecosystem. This is necessary to ensure all corners of the regional RII ecosystem connect and work together effectively to promote health and social care RII activity.

- Cardiff and Vale may promote and support RII initiatives throughout health and social care by building regional communities of practice and strengthening links with national and international partners.
- Third sector partners are prepared to participate in RII and have good expertise and experience working in Cardiff and Vale's Health and Care domains. Further investigation is needed to identify third sector stakeholders, issues, and skill sets.
- Cardiff and Vale might build more long-term, integrated RII arrangements. There may be opportunities to build common finance mechanisms to facilitate RII across health and social care, giving a greater balance of resource and support across all stakeholders in Cardiff & Vale's Health and Social Care RII ecosystem.
- In addition to coordinating RII activity in the region, the Cardiff and Vale RIC Hub might also engage with regional partners to define an end-to-end open health and social care RII support system. This may provide a platform for developing more RII-focused forums around specific subjects, which bring together all regional stakeholders in a cross-sectoral, multi-disciplinary manner to encourage a more integrated, joined-up approach to RII across the region.
- As alluded to in the primary data findings presented in this report, there is a need to devote more time and resources to establishing an organisational culture supportive of RII, in addition to increased support and more extensive training across health and social care disciplines in the region. This may include maturing RII infrastructure across Local Authorities and Social Care by establishing dedicated leadership roles and wider team structures with a defined remit to promote, develop, and support RII work.

# Conclusion

The aim of this report was to provide a brief overview of the health and social care RII ecosystem across Cardiff and Vale, outlining RII assets, infrastructure, and programmes that hold great potential to facilitate positive transformation in domains of health and social care within the region.

The Cardiff and Vale region and related partners appear to be in a strong position to build on the Health and Social Care related RII activity presently underway within the region to assist the transformation of regional Health and Care systems. Using the report's findings and recommendations, as well as best practices from Wales, the UK, and abroad, the region may build a highly favourable climate for RII activity in health and social care. However, a stronger regional emphasis is needed in various domains to help RII activities flourish in the region. Future success depends on better communication and the continuous adoption of open RII techniques by all regional partners, including Health, Social Care, Local Authorities, Academia, Industry, the Third Sector, and Civil Society. This will foster cross-pollination of ideas and information and resource sharing across organisational boundaries, where good ideas, expertise, resources, enabling infrastructure, and related systems merge synergistically to benefit the regional population. The issue is to continue the beneficial shift and related approaches presented in this report.



## Research Limitations

Although the full report upon which this summary report is based provides an extensive overview of health and social care RII activities across the Cardiff and Vale region, the product of the report is not without its limitations. Many of these limitations stem from the environment and context within which it was conducted (i.e. during a global pandemic), with this placing mounting pressures on health and social care staff and stakeholders. This had a negative impact on the timeliness of information received, in addition to stakeholder engagement, which consequently impacted upon the scale of the project. The report only summarises information that the researchers were able to gather within the stated timeframes, boundaries and context, which was accurate up until publication date (April 2022). Further to this, the report in question may not be wholly comprehensive due to the dynamic and evolving nature of RII activities. This further highlights the need for a central organising body (like the RIC Hub) to track and coordinate all RII activities ongoing across the region and record them using a single central location.

## Recommendations for Further Research

This report provides strong foundations upon which future research might be based. Being cognizant of the limitations of the report outlined in the previous section, recommendations for future research include:

- Securing increased engagement with stakeholders from primary and community care, who were unable to engage with this research owing to the environment of the review.
- Including commercial sector organisations in the mapping of the regions RII ecosystem.
- Conducting an assessment and comparison of national and worldwide best practises in innovative Health and Social Care service delivery to provide a framework for upscaling and transferring RII activities.
- Formulation and appraisal of techniques for upscaling good RII practices and lessons learned.

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