

PRESS RELEASE

Embargoed until 00:00 Wednesday 17 September 2025

“Inclusive research means better research and fairer systems” - New action plan to increase inclusion in research and address health inequalities

Health and Care Research Wales is launching a new three-year action plan to increase diversity and inclusion in health and social care research in Wales.

The plan will be launched this week by the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, Professor Isabel Oliver, at a special event at the Senedd, where a new partnership between Health and Care Research Wales and [Oxford University's Centre for Research Equity \(CfRE\)](#) will also be announced.

Healthcare inequalities are a continuing challenge in Wales. Factors such as ethnicity, disability, age and deprivation can all influence health, even before people become unwell. For example, women born in the most disadvantaged areas of Wales live on average 17 fewer years in good health than those born in the most affluent areas.

When sections of society are overlooked, healthcare inequalities worsen. Lack of inclusivity can also seriously diminish trust in health and care systems, making future recruitment and engagement in research even more challenging.

The importance of trust is something that public involvement member Praveena Pemmasani, 23, from Cardiff, also emphasises. Praveena is in her final year studying Medicine at Cardiff University and has for the last six years helped advise researchers on the most effective ways to plan, deliver and interpret their studies as part of a public involvement group for young people aged 14 to 25.

Praveena said, "Being more inclusive in your research means you are drawing from a more representative population, making your findings relevant to more people. It also helps build trust within the communities affected by the research. Ultimately, researchers can collect all the data they want, but if communities don't trust that the research is relevant to them, it's futile."

“There can be a lot of assumptions around younger age groups, but the best people to ask are the individuals themselves. We add perspective the researchers hadn’t considered and help tailor research to that audience. My favourite part is when, having worked with someone on the methodology, they come back to us for help interpreting the results and turning it into useful outputs.”

Professor Isabel Oliver, Chief Medical Officer for Wales, said, “Research is essential to help guide our efforts to improve and protect the health of the people of Wales. That research needs to reflect the populations most affected by the issues being researched to help us tackle the large gaps between those with the best and worst health and wellbeing which still persist and are in some cases are widening.

“Earlier this year the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care announced his intention for Wales to become a Marmot Nation: one which recognises that health inequalities are mostly shaped by the conditions in which people are born, live, work and age, and takes action to reduce them. Increasing diversity and inclusion in research is an important part of achieving this, and will lead to a healthier and fairer Wales.

“We look forward to seeing the impact of this action plan and partnership on that intention, to ensure Welsh research is inclusive, meaningful and beneficial for all.”

Professor Mahendra Patel, founding director and Inclusion and Diversity lead, CfRE, said, “Overlooking certain groups — whether due to ethnicity, disability, age, rurality, or any other factor — risks deepening inequalities and producing biased guidance. Treatments may be less effective, or carry unexpected side effects, for underrepresented populations.

“Inclusive research is better research — it leads to evidence that applies to all. It builds fairer systems and gives us the knowledge to understand and meet the health and care needs of the communities we serve. This new plan and partnership reflect the strong appetite in Wales to work collaboratively and lead the way in embedding inclusive research practices that benefit everyone.”

Professor Aziz Sheikh, Head of the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, said, “We’re delighted that our Centre for Research Equity is partnering with Health and Care Research Wales on this vital initiative. As a department committed to advancing primary care for all communities, we know that research which doesn’t reflect the full diversity of the populations it aims to serve simply isn’t good enough. This partnership exemplifies the collaborative approach needed to

ensure that health and care research truly benefits everyone, and we're proud to support Wales in leading the way on inclusive research practices."

Carys Thomas, Head of Policy at the Science, Research and Evidence Division, Welsh Government, said, "It is vital that everyone in Wales has a voice and opportunity to contribute to research. We're grateful to our colleagues at the CfRE, and also our vibrant research infrastructure across Wales for their commitment to helping make Wales a leader in research inclusivity, and healthier nation overall."

Health and Care Research Wales is supported by Welsh Government and works with the NHS, universities, other research funders, patients and the public to fund, promote and support high-quality research relevant to the needs and challenges of everyone in Wales.

ENDS

Notes to editors

For media enquiries, please contact **Sally Taylor-Goodwin, Communications & Marketing Officer,** Health and Care Research Wales: sally.taylor-goodwin@wales.nhs.uk .

About Health and Care Research Wales

Health and Care Research Wales is the delivery arm and external brand of the Welsh Government's Health and Social Services Research & Development Division. Health and Care Research Wales works in partnership with the NHS, universities, local government, other research funders, patients and the public to fund, support and increase research that can transform lives, promotes economic growth and advance science.

For more information visit: www.healthandcareresearchwales.org

About The Centre for Research Equity

The CfRE, based in Oxford's Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health and Sciences, advances health equity by building strategic partnerships and promoting inclusive research practices across the UK and beyond. It focuses on strengthening inclusive research infrastructure, influencing equitable research policy, and ensuring that under-represented communities are meaningfully involved in health and care research.

For more information visit: Centre for research equity