

CPG Medical Research: Call for Evidence, January 2020

Tenovus Cancer Care is Wales' leading cancer charity. Our aims are simple. We want to help prevent, treat and find a cure for cancer.

We do this by offering support, advice and treatment to cancer patients and their loved ones. We also promote healthy lifestyles and fund cancer research to find new ways to prevent it, diagnose it, and treat it.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to this important call for evidence.

Theme: Welsh initiatives

Q1. Are you working with or part of the Sêr Cymru programme? How do you think the research community in Wales could work with you in the future?

Yes. Sêr Cymru funded 50% of one of our laboratory-based PhDs based in Cardiff (£45k).

Future collaboration in terms of joint funding research projects with matching aims and objectives would be very positive.

Q2. Have you worked with Health and Care Research Wales? How do you think the research community in Wales could work with HCRW in the future?

Our main involvement with Health and Care Research Wales has been through our Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) work. They assisted by supporting recruitment and ongoing training.

In future, a partnership agreement of shared research collaboration and funding may be an option. In addition there may be external functions where the groups could align; for example. We would welcome cross party support for the Cancer Research Strategy for Wales (CreST).

Do you have any comments on the forthcoming Post-Compulsory Education Training and Research (PCETR) Bill and the creation of Research and Innovation Wales?

None.

Theme: QR and other funding

How is QR funding allocated in your institution?

Not applicable

How are you leveraging funding from non-university sources, including research councils, industry and third sector?

Not applicable.

How does access to QR funding support you to attract additional funding from other sources?

It doesn't. QR funding is lower in Wales than in the rest of UK and therefore there is effectively a disincentive to do research in Wales, all things being held equal.

What support do you think could be offered by Welsh Government to help you attract funding from other sources?

There is a perception, intentional or not, of a focus on academia and industry with the third sector playing a second-tier role. A rebalancing of that relationship would certainly be positive.

Are there any improvements you believe could be made to QR funding in Wales?

It would be beneficial to ensure funding in Wales is more equitable to the rest of the UK.

Do you perceive any risk to QR funding in the current climate?

All funding is at risk in the current climate given the implications for Horizon 2020, WEFO and KESS.

What is the university's mechanism for paying for direct funds?

Not applicable.

How are you leveraging other sector funds?

Not applicable.

Are your researchers turning down funds because they can't access indirect funds?

No researchers potentially funded by Tenovus Cancer Care have turned down a grant due to being unable to access indirect funds. However, it may be reasonable to hypothesise that some may not have applied or have withdrawn before the application deadline due to realising this may be an issue should they be awarded the grant.

Are you aware of, and do you use the Charity Research Support Fund?

Yes, we are aware of this fund and it is something which several of our researchers have identified and discussed. However, we are unable to say how many used this fund.

Theme: Project-based nature of awards and careers

What support do you think is required to help researchers at all points in their careers?

- Peer mentoring.
- Ensuring there is a balance between research, teaching and extracurricular activity in higher sector.
- Pathways to delivering, enabling or at the very least recognising, the ever-increasing emphasis on impact.
- Smaller, accessible pots to apply for grants. These might show acceptability or proof of concept of research but are also more accessible to early career researchers due to their size and flexibility.
- Protected hours to undertake research against teaching commitments.

Is there a need to draw more talent/students to work on projects?

Yes. Tenovus Cancer Care strongly supports opportunities to provide training and to enhance the skills of the next generation of researchers. However, this must be a meaningful contribution which is recognised and geared more towards formal training as opposed to it representing a source of free labour.

Do you think that current schemes for retaining talent in Wales are achieving their aims?

No. In the cancer sector we are seeing workforce shortfalls in several senior clinical researchers' areas. Investing in and incentivising talent to stay in Wales will encourage sustainability as well as exploring ways to retain more staff who are approaching the end of their career.

Do you have any suggestions on how we might assist students to develop their careers in Wales?

Increased incentivisation such as competitive PhD schemes, work placed learning and the promotion of an active research community.

If you have worked in Wales, and left, what would have made you stay?

Not applicable.

Theme: Collaboration between institutions/settings

Does your work involve collaborating with other Welsh or UK universities?

Very much so. By far the largest proportion of our research grant funding goes to Welsh Universities. In addition to this we have funded research in UK universities when the specialised expertise has deemed this necessary.

Also, through various schemes, such as KESS, we work in partnership with Welsh universities to fund and provide studentships where there are both academic and industrial components to the training opportunities.

We have worked alongside universities, such as Cardiff University, in order to apply for funding for research from other funders such as Cancer Research UK (CRUK) and Yorkshire Cancer Research (YCR). This has been a truly co-productive endeavour to enhance the quality of the research.

Can you detail how your work with other institutions takes place?

In addition to the above we have also worked with health boards, though this has essentially been through funding research applications. We have also worked with other charities by facilitating the grants management process when they lack the necessary infrastructure.

We collaborate with other institutions to maximise engagement opportunities. For example we work with other members of the Wales Cancer Research Centre (such as Cancer Research UK and Wales Cancer Research) to organise and share events to publicise opportunities to research in cancer in Wales.

Do you collaborate with the NHS? If so, do you encounter any difficulties in collaborating? (E.g. protected clinician time, policies on GDPR etc.)

We collaborate through contributing to the Research Capacity Building Collaboration (RCBC) scheme. The purpose of this to allocate time and resources for health care professionals to set aside for training in research and undertaking research activity. The idea is good in principle but is not without its challenges. For example, there are often delays in the research, partly due to the lack of experience of the researcher, but also due to the immense time pressure they seem to be subjected to meaning they are often delayed in undertaking the work.

Is your collaboration with other institutions encouraged?

Very much so. In fact it forms a key component of Tenovus Cancer Care Research Strategy.

Theme: Wider Collaboration

EU collaboration

Do you work with EU colleagues or universities to conduct your research?

Is your research reliant on EU colleagues/universities?

Yes. A number of our PhD students' supervisors are EU nationals living and working in Wales. Some are finding the uncertainty caused by Brexit highly disruptive.

UK/England collaboration

Do you carry out research with UK/England institutions?

Yes. Through our partnership with the NCRI we are part of wider project and/or fund research project with UK institutions.

In terms of direct funding, we do little in this space. However, we are putting together a partnership with NWCR to joint fund studentships in our combined catchment area. This would include the north west of England and all of Wales.

How are Welsh interests represented within this collaboration?

Primarily this is through our direct representation at the NCRI but also via our relationship with NWCR.

Have you had any engagement with those setting up the Wales Research in London Office (WRILO) as part of the response to Professor Reid's review?

No – other than attending presentations hosted by WRILO as part of it.

How do you feel this resource could support your work in the future?

We anticipate the need for greater direct support from the WRILO after Brexit to ensure Wales remains on the agenda for research support.

Theme: UKRI

Do you feel that there is clear training and support how to get UKRI funding?

The support offered and opportunities appear clear with specific funding easy to identify. When affiliated to a university (Cardiff) there were clear training opportunities showing how to access funding. In the third sector, it feels less clear as to what might be on offer in terms of training and support if it does at all exist.

Do you have any comments on how Welsh Government could support applications to UKRI funding?

This could be supported by, for example, providing a centralised resource for training, template documents, and signposting to allied partners.

How do you work with UKRI and are there opportunities to further develop these relationships within Wales?

We currently have limited interaction with UKRI. However, we are looking to increase the number of grant applications and funding awards taken forward as part of collaboration through UKRI.

Does your Institution incentivise UKRI?

Not applicable

Has the restructuring of UKRI has had a negative or positive impact on the chances of getting funded within the Wales medical research sector?

Not applicable

Does your Institution have clear lines of communication with Welsh Government on UKRI policy?

Yes.

Do you work with the UKRI Devolved Nations Office, and are you aware of the different funding streams available to you as a researcher in Wales?

Though we do not work with the UKRI Devolved Nations Office, I am aware (to the best of my ability) of the different funding streams available both through the UKRI and through other streams.

Theme: Research informing Welsh policy recommendations

How do you think your research could be translated into policy or practice in Wales?

Research funded by Tenovus Cancer Care should have impact running throughout the project; from its inception to implementation. Every type of application should consider how it intends to influence the sphere in which it works.

Are you aware of how you might make policy-makers aware of your research?

Our Research and Policy teams work closely together in order to identify potential policy implications of our research and ensure that they are incorporated within the wider narrative.

Theme: Innovation in funding bids

Have you won funding for research into producing innovative solutions in line with Welsh strategies such as the Future Generations Act etc.?

No.

Do you think current Welsh Government policy on innovation supports your research?

We responded to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee consultation on research and Innovation in Wales. Our response [can be found here](#).

Do you work with any research partners such as the Life Sciences Hub, MediWales, Medicines Catapult, or others?

Yes. We work with the Life Sciences Hub. Currently we are part of the innovation network as well as partnering on a specific recent project to run a 'Cancer innovation Challenge' specific to cancer which took place in late November 2019.

Theme: Research in healthcare settings**Do you carry out research in clinical settings?**

We fund research in clinical settings but we do not directly undertake the research ourselves.

What type of research do you carry out?

Currently we fund research with the broad brief of cancer research. This includes understanding the causes of cancer at the molecular level, treatment and psychosocial research in areas such as prevention and long term care.

Who is your research funded by?

We largely fund research ourselves, paid for by supporters and donors to the charity. However, we also undertake research ourselves (although not clinical, see above) or collaborate with Higher Education institutions to apply to large funders such as CRUK or to trusts and funds interesting in this work.

Do you encounter any difficulties with GDPR or information sharing?

Some of the grant holders we fund have initially queries during the signing of terms and conditions to ensure that data is shared without it compromising GDPR. Other than this, there are no major difficulties.

Do you collaborate with industry or education through your work?

We collaborate extensively with the education sector. Though industry is not an area we are currently involved with, we are often asked by potential applicants if we have any involvement and this is an area with which we are increasingly interested.

Theme: Protected time in clinical roles**Does your department/hospital ensure you have protected time to carry out your research?**

Not applicable

Has your research enabled changes in practice within your healthcare setting?

Not applicable

What are the barriers to carrying out research in clinical roles?

See comments above regarding RCBC.

Are there any successes you would like to see rolled out as best practice examples?

Not applicable.

Theme: Patient Involvement**Do you work with patients in your research?**

Very much so and this is only going to increase. We have patients involved in 2 major initiatives: our Research Advisory Group (RAG) and through our Research Network.

The Research Network:

This is a quarterly (or ad hoc if necessary) e-newsletter sent out to supporters giving opportunities to be involved in research projects which Tenovus Cancer Care fund, or are involved in.

The Research Advisory Group:

This is a Committee made up of people who have been affected by cancer. They review and decide on applications for our iGrant scheme.

How do you recruit and involve patients and how do you evaluate their experience of participating?

See above.

We are in the process of re-evaluating our current PPI. This will involve collecting data from the RAG as well as working with researchers we fund to identify the impact of PPI involvement on the research process they undertook. We ask how the researcher intends to work with patients/public and what they hope to achieve through this activity. This will then be monitored and reported on at the end of the project.

We will also be asking patients to describe their experiences through our Research Network, identifying opportunities that have been taken up, the reasons why and experiences from doing so.

What barriers or challenges do you have to working with patients?

Ensuring that PPI representation is varied and representative is a challenge. In Wales it is particularly common to have the same individuals on several panels and projects.

Ensuring PPI representatives feel equipped and trained to undertake the tasks requested of them and that the more experienced representatives focus on the purpose of the task.

How does working with patients help you to develop your research?

It increases the chances that research conducted and funded by Tenovus Cancer Care is more meaningful, necessary and successful. Ultimately it also increases the chance of our research being more impactful with the results being sustainable in the long term.

Theme: Industry

Are there incentives that Wales could develop to facilitate industry working with Welsh research institutions?

No comment.

Do you believe it is clear what the national offer of Wales is in terms of more infrastructure, skills and opportunities?

No. However, we have been involved in and contributed to the Cancer Research Strategy for Wales and hope to see cross party commitment to its implementation.

Are you aware of the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) in England and is there a need for a similar fund in Wales?

We are aware of the fund though as our footprint is primarily related to Wales we are unsure of the specifics. If the evidence base is there, a similar fund would be most welcome in Wales.