



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board

Research and Innovation Strategic Plan

2025-2030



Supporting the Delivery of
A Healthier Mid and West Wales

Foreword

At Hywel Dda University Health Board, our vision is to deliver high-quality, impactful research and innovation that enhances services and improves health outcomes for our communities, patients, and staff. This strategy outlines the approach we will take over the next five years to achieve this vision, aligning with the University Health Board's *A Healthier Mid and West Wales* strategy.

Over the past four years, we have made significant progress, raising the profile of research and innovation across the University Health Board and with our partners. We now have designated research facilities in each county, more clinical researchers than ever before, well-established partnerships with universities and industry, and new innovation and evaluation capabilities through our TriTech Institute. However, now is the time to build on these achievements and capitalise on a favourable research and innovation policy and funding landscape in both Wales and the UK.

By implementing this strategy, we will enhance access to impactful research and innovation in key areas such as cancer care, respiratory disease, women's health, metabolic disease, primary care, digital health, and the social determinants of health and wellbeing. We are committed to fostering a culture that enables research and innovation, ensuring broader participation, and empowering all health and care staff — both clinical and non-clinical — to contribute. Research-active organisations not only attract top talent but also retain staff by fostering higher levels of job satisfaction.

We acknowledge that achieving progress in these areas requires collaboration. Therefore, we will strengthen our partnerships with universities, public bodies, community organisations, and industry. We recognise that NHS organisations with strong research and innovation activities benefit not only patients but also the regional, Welsh, and UK economies by driving new innovations, job creation, and economic growth.

Strategic plans must be accompanied by a strong implementation approach. To ensure this, this strategy has been developed through a rigorous process and will guide the work of our Research and Innovation Division over the next five years. One of our first actions will be to establish a measurement framework to track progress. Every proposal within this document is practical and deliverable. We will also implement a robust engagement strategy across clinical and professional groups to support delivery. Additionally, the strategic plan will be subject to oversight by the new Digital, Data, and Innovation Committee.

Let's work together to turn this ambitious plan into reality for the communities of South West Wales.



Mr Mark Henwood
EXECUTIVE MEDICAL DIRECTOR



Dr Leighton Phillips
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION,
AND VALUE



Research and Innovation Matter

Research and innovation helps the NHS diagnose diseases more accurately and at an earlier point, supports the development of effective treatments, prevents people from developing conditions, improves the way in which care is delivered, and ultimately improves health outcomes and quality of life. The wider benefits of research and innovation to the NHS include improved workforce satisfaction and retention, better patient and carer experience, lower mortality, and improved financial performance. Our last Research and Innovation Strategy (2021) was designed to bring about these benefits in the context of Hywel Dda UHB's wider strategy – *A Healthier Mid and West Wales*.

Wider Context

A great deal has been achieved in the period following the publication of our last strategy, as will be evidenced throughout this document. However, significant developments have also happened in the time that has elapsed since its publication, including:

The launch of the Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Plan

(2022), setting out how the Welsh Government will achieve its mission of promoting, supporting and providing collective oversight of health and social care research in Wales. The plan outlined four aims, associated activities, and the financial environment within which our research and development function operates. In a related document, published in 2023, HCRW published a new framework containing a set of expectations and standards for NHS organisations. More recently, the Welsh Government has refreshed its strategy – *A Healthier Wales* – with stronger research and development planning objectives and has developed focused plans relating to commercial research and cancer studies.



Developments at a UK level, including the publication of the Lord O'Shaughnessy Review (2023) into commercial clinical trials in the UK. This was followed in 2024 by the launch of the Voluntary Scheme for Branded Medicine Pricing, Access and Growth (VPAG) Investment Programme, which has unlocked substantial funding to overcome constraints to delivering a higher level of commercial trials activity across the UK. There have also been major steps to strengthen the innovation ecosystem in England. Building on recent reviews, including the Life Sciences Vision, Accelerated Access Review, and Lord Darzi's investigation, Roland Sinker CBE, has recently set out the blueprint for an Innovation Ecosystem Programme (IEP).



The publication of the National Innovation Strategy – Wales Innovates, Creating a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales and Action Plan (2023). This was followed by the Welsh Government's Health Department advancing enabling actions and establishing a new Digital, Data, Technology, Innovation, and Value Directorate within the NHS Executive, with an interest in supporting the adoption of an innovation.





The health innovation system in Wales has been greatly assisted through several positive developments by the Life Sciences Hub for Wales serving to stimulate innovation and industry partnerships, including through a cancer mission. The Bevan Commission's groundbreaking work entitled *The Foundations for the Future Model of Health and Care in Wales* and related work in West Wales by the *Together for Change* are serving to broaden the definition of innovation to encompass social alongside technical. Organisations including Medi Wales and ABPI Cymru have continued to play invaluable roles in convening, enabling and bridging between the latest health innovations and the NHS.



The intention of Hywel Dda UHB to refresh its strategy – *A Healthier Mid and West Wales (2018)*. While it is not anticipated this refresh will alter the fundamental principles and vision of the strategy, which have stood the test of time, it will afford Hywel Dda UHB opportunity to:

- Refresh its strategic objectives.
- Focus on digital, population health, the social model for health and providing more care in the community.
- Re-consider the infrastructure options, and sequencing, in support of this vision.
- Assess the role of each of the acute sites and the configuration of services to provide resilient and high-quality services from within the existing hospital network.
- Consider opportunities for regional working and strengthen the relationship with the wider community to co-produce and co-deliver a future model of health care.

The advancement of our Value Based Health Care programme has brought unique research and innovation assets, including routine patient reported outcome measurement and costing in many service delivery areas.



Developments have been advanced at a regional level, including the establishment of the Joint Committee for Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda University Health Board and its early priority to strengthen research and innovation collaboration across the region.

These drivers and opportunities, together with a candid assessment of our current position and considerable internal and external engagement over a 10-month period, have led to the development of this strategic plan. In the sections that follow, you will find our vision and the high-level outcome areas for which we will strive over the next five years, including an overview of why they are important and the initial actions we will advance in respect of each. The strategic plan concludes with a short section on what we will do to monitor delivery and hold ourselves and others to account in the delivery of an ambitious vision and direction that has been set.

Vision and Aims

Our vision is to deliver high-quality and impactful research and innovation, improving services and health outcomes for our communities, patients, and staff.

We will realise our vision by:



Improving access to high-quality research and innovation that improves services, health and wellbeing.



Creating an environment and culture that develops and enables competent and empowered researchers and innovators to flourish.



Developing and sustaining partnerships that maximise and accelerate research and innovation access and impact.

These areas will be unpacked in the sections that follow. In respect of each area, our strategic plan will:

- Outline why the area is important, including providing an account of the current situation and what needs to be improved over the next five years; and
- Include high level priorities for making the improvements described.

The final section will set out our approach to delivering the strategic plan, including our internal governance arrangements and the way in which we will manage partnerships with external organisations.



Access and Impact



Improve access to high-quality research and innovation that improves services, health and wellbeing.



Why this is an area of focus:

We believe that high-quality research and innovation can improve health services, health outcomes, change lives and enhance livelihoods. The key purpose of our department is to ensure those working in Hywel Dda UHB and/or receiving our services can develop and access high-quality research and innovation. Over the past four years, we have made substantial progress in supporting research and innovation in areas including women's health, respiratory, orthopaedics, stroke, cardiovascular, ophthalmology, and through our TriTech initiative, service and technology evaluation. The department has frequently met and exceeded its performance targets, and its progress and awards have reflected positively on Hywel Dda UHB and even led to it undertaking work on behalf of the Welsh NHS Executive.

However, several challenges remain. We are too reliant on a limited number of researchers and innovators, who do not always enjoy the wider organisational support and succession planning that would ensure sustainability. The quest

for operational alignment will underpin every aspect of this strategic plan and our intentions for the next period, including taking more time to prioritise the research and innovation that can have greatest impact on wider organisational plans.

We continue to see disparities in the clinical trials we offer, relative to other organisations with an equivalent population size and comparable disease burden, in areas including cancer and metabolic disease.

There is a clear and well evidenced need to increase our commercial trial activity and the level of research and innovation carried out in primary care and community settings. The latter being of particular importance in view of Hywel Dda UHB's intended move to a social model for health and wellbeing and firm commitments around tackling the wider determinants of health and wellbeing and guided by the biopsychosocial model of health.

There is an opportunity to position our organisation at the forefront of a rapidly advancing digital research and innovation movement.

We will improve access and impact by:

1

Harnessing the opportunities and investment associated with national initiatives and developments where they align to this strategic plan, including:

- Increasing the number and type of commercial research studies supported, securing investment through the Voluntary Pricing Agreement for Access and Growth (VPAG) and commercial income generation.
- Working with national research centres and associated developments. This will allow us to sustain the level of awards received through the Health and Care Research Wales Faculty, enhance our researcher development capabilities and work with the nationally sponsored research leads and networks.
- Collaborating with the new National Strategic Clinical Networks on innovation work programmes with the greatest potential to drive change, improve outcomes, reduce variation and improve the health and lives of our population.
- Further developing the TriTech Institute in support of medical technology, clinical pathway and innovation strategies, plans and associated initiatives, including those being evaluated by Health Technology Wales and considered by the Life Sciences Hub Wales.

2

Working with the Swansea Bay and Hywel Dda UHB Joint Committee, and other partners, to advance a regional research and innovation programme, which:

- Encompasses service areas where there is a cross-organisation delivery approach and aligned research and innovation opportunities (e.g. cancer and cardiovascular disease).
- Increases commercial research and innovation through the TriTech Institute at Hywel Dda UHB and in collaboration with the Joint Clinical Research Facility at Swansea University with Swansea Bay UHB.

3

Increasing research and innovation activities within Hywel Dda UHB, by:

- Establishing thematic groups, with meaningful public and patient engagement, in research and innovation active and emerging areas (e.g. women's health, respiratory, real world evidence and evaluation), acknowledging the need to develop the capacity to secure ongoing impact.
- Developing research and innovation capacity in new areas, including corporate departments (e.g. digital services, leadership and management practice), primary care and public health research.

- Supporting community based social research and innovation, to address social determinants and advance a social model of health and wellbeing. We will identify research and innovation that advances the biopsychosocial model of health.
- Developing the TriTech Institute as a centre of excellence for real world evidence studies and evaluations, including implementation science, aligned with national and international strategic developments.
- Strengthening the contribution research and innovation makes to wider operational challenges, including service fragility, improving quality of care and enhancing health outcomes.
- Utilising our Value Based Health Care assets to support our research and innovation programmes, notably our patient reported outcome information and costing methodologies. This will include developing economic evaluation and Return on Investment (RoI) as a core public health and value-based healthcare research priority.



Environment and Culture



Create an environment and culture that develops and enables competent and empowered researchers and innovators to flourish.

Improving access to impactful research and innovation requires competent, energised, and empowered individuals and teams. Our department plays a key role by creating an environment that enables teams to conduct high-quality research and innovation.

Our support includes study and project design and setup, recruitment, evaluation and analysis, training, contracting and quality management. We provide high-quality facilities and advice for colleagues and help secure investments and grants to overcome barriers to the effective conduct of research and innovation. These grants often enable staff to secure time for research and innovation alongside their day jobs.

Our department has doubled in size over the past four years and has gained a reputation for a positive 'can do' culture that is welcomed by teams across the organisation. Over the same period, there has been a fourfold increase in clinicians with dedicated time for research and innovation.

We now have a dedicated research presence and facilities at each of our hospital sites. However, some challenges remain. We must improve the visibility of our functions across the organisation. We must demonstrate the contribution research and innovation can make to long standing organisational issues, including recruitment and retention and the delivery of sustainable services.

Our department is heavily reliant on external investment and is therefore sensitive to the priorities of these external parties and fluctuations in funding. The latter presents an ongoing tension in balancing team capacity with demand and ensuring we can maximise our impact in support of Hywel Dda UHB. Also, when benchmarked against other organisations, our overall level of research and innovation investment does not appear commensurate with our population size or disease burden.

Looking to the future, this strategy will ensure Hywel Dda UHB is ideally poised to address these challenges, including identifying opportunities associated with a refreshed clinical strategy, VPAG investment programme, and innovation developments associated with the NHS Executive clinical networks.



We will improve our research and innovation environment by:

1

Developing our dynamic, forward-thinking, and enabling department. This will include:

- Strengthening the way that we communicate and engage with individuals and teams across the organisation and raising awareness through a research and innovation conference and events to celebrate achievements.
- Enhancing our researcher development capabilities and developing our departmental staff to become research and innovation leaders, with specialist areas of interest and appropriate education and support.
- Increasing the use of research and innovation facilities and taking advantage of the new facility at the Pentre Awel scheme.
- Ensuring improved and consistent performance against both national and University Health Board key performance targets, where these are within our control.
- Implementing a new business plan for the TriTech Institute and maximising its contribution to Hywel Dda UHB's clinical strategy.
- Diversifying income sources, including developing improved financial capacity to take on internally commissioned research and innovation, accessing more funding from Health and Care Research Wales programmes and schemes, increasing commercial research activity, and securing longer term grant income and partnerships with commercial organisations and national organisations.
- Playing an active part in identifying and resolving the barriers to increasing research and innovation activity, including those associated with enabling services (e.g. digital, information governance, pharmacy, pathology, radiology).
- Developing Hywel Dda UHB approach to innovation adoption where there is strong evidence to do so, working closely with financial and procurement colleagues.
- Developing meaningful capacity to support research and innovation activities relating to the wider social determinants of health and wellbeing.
- Strengthening innovation commercialisation expertise.





2

Developing the next generation of research and innovation leaders, including:

- Increasing the number of professionals with a dedicated and ongoing time commitment to lead research and innovation. This will include clinical academics operating under the performance management arrangements of universities and professionals managed by Hywel Dda UHB, with dedicated time to lead research and innovation, including those with links to university partners. We will identify opportunities that:
 - Align to the interests and priorities of our research and innovation groups.
 - Support service delivery areas to improve the attractiveness of key clinical positions.
 - Contribute to regional service models where we know patient access to research and innovation is currently limited.
- Widening the range of professionals (e.g. public health) with allocated time for advancing research and innovation projects and programmes.

- Increasing the proportion of staff with time within their working week to enable research and innovation.

3

Embedding research and innovation into planning, performance, and governance arrangements throughout the organisation. This will include:

- Incorporating research and innovation performance measures into wider organisational plans and governance arrangements and enabling the delivery of the same through the resources and support that the department can offer.
- Securing a clearer link between research and innovation and the recruitment and retention plans of Hywel Dda UHB.
- Developing a richer programme of researcher development opportunities, with clear alignment to organisational development programmes within Hywel Dda UHB.
- Developing an ongoing process of engagement with different professional, clinical and non-clinical groups across the organisation, focused on what more can be done to advance the aims of this strategy.

Partnerships



Develop and sustain partnerships that maximise and accelerate research and innovation access and impact.

Meaningful partnerships with other public services, communities, universities, and industry matter. Partnerships bring resources, momentum, understanding and know how to the process of research and innovation. They maximise its potential to have a positive impact on our employees, the services we provide, and the outcomes delivered with our communities.

We have invested significantly in partnerships over the past four years. We have strong university partnerships that have increased and accelerated joint working projects, established new joint and honorary appointments, and developed bespoke educational programmes. We have an effective approach to joint working with industry that has led to many collaborative projects with large medical technology and biopharmaceutical companies.

Our regional working practices have matured through impactful collaborative projects being advanced with Swansea Bay University Health Board. We have supported Hywel Dda UHB's ambition for a social model for health and wellbeing by implementing a work programme leading to the establishment of a Social Innovation Institute. We have led projects on behalf of the Welsh NHS Executive and the European Union, in areas including respiratory health, social prescribing, and public health.

Regardless of this progress, now is the right time to revitalise current partnerships in view of the priorities for the next five years. There is also considerable potential to establish new collaborative partnerships focused on our goals of widening research and innovation access and impact.



We will strengthen our partnership to deliver access and impact by:

1

Improving the alignment and reciprocity between current university partners and our research and innovation plans.

This will involve refreshing our collaboration agreements with each university partner and developing an improved way of managing our bi-lateral and multi-lateral partnerships. We will agree a maximum of three long term research and innovation goals with each university partner, strongly aligned to their plans. Our goals with:

- Swansea University could include working trilaterally with Swansea Bay UHB to improve research and innovation in service areas that are delivered on a regional footprint and supporting the National Network for Innovation in Sport and Health (NNISH).
- University of Wales Trinity St David, could include sustaining our technical innovation partnership and developing a new Social Innovation Institute.
- Aberystwyth University could include developing our relationship with the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences (IBERs) and harnessing our shared interest in community based development and research catalysed by the Local Policy Innovation Partnership for Local Growth (LPIP).

2

Establishing new university partnerships in areas of aligned interest, which could include:

- Increasing the number of co-funded posts aligned to Hywel Dda UHB and university priorities.
- Proactively expanding research partnerships relating to our public health research missions.

3

Evolving our industry partnership arrangements through:

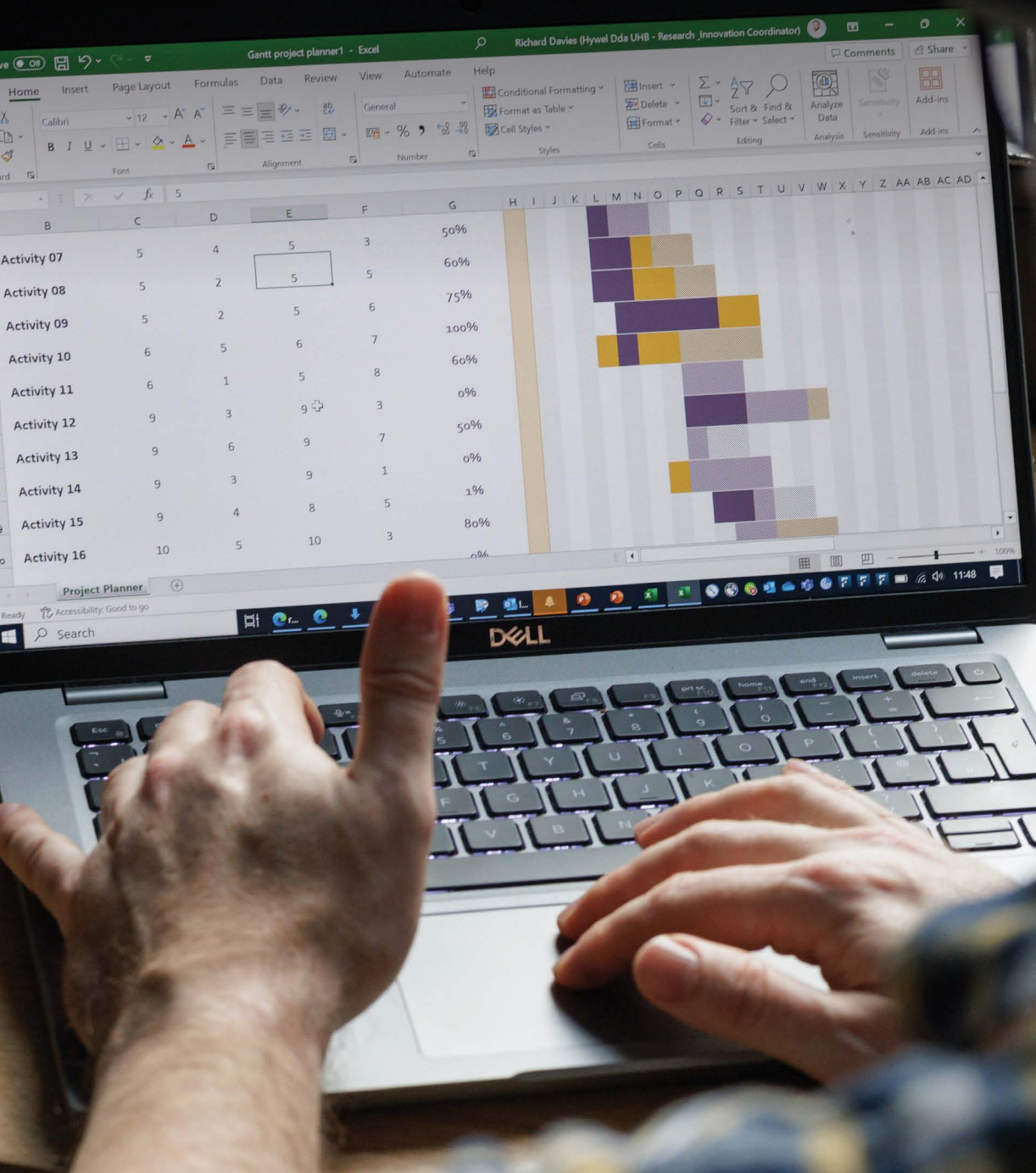
- Entering agreements with the City Region Growth Deal schemes and developing a systematic way of supporting the life science sector in South West Wales.
- Developing long term joint working partnerships with industry in areas of aligned interest.
- Establishing a new wave of joint clinical fellowships with industry.
- Working with national and industry partners to create an innovation skills development programme that helps NHS staff to work with industry partners.

4

Strengthening public and community partnership arrangements, including regional developments. This will include:

- Shaping and contributing to the delivery of the South West Wales Joint Committee agenda and related research and innovation initiatives.
- Shaping and contributing to the delivery of the Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care, and related research and innovation initiatives.
- Collaborating with the NHS Wales Executive as a delivery partner for research and innovation projects associated with the national clinical networks.
- Working with other public bodies (Delta Wellbeing) and community organisations and missions (Together for Change) on joint research and innovation projects and programmes aligning to Hywel Dda UHB's refreshed strategy and this strategic plan.





Delivering the Strategic Plan

Delivering the Strategic Plan

The delivery of the strategic plan will be embedded in the day-to-day activities of our department, ensuring it remains central to how we plan, manage and deliver high-quality and impactful research and innovation. We believe strategic plans are delivered in dynamic and ever-changing contexts. While staying true to our high level aims, our delivery approach will enable an agile response to the associated shifting demands and flexibility in decision making.

In practical terms, this means key implementation decisions and monitoring will take place through the Research and Delivery Leadership Group and TriTech and Innovation Group. The operational teams beneath each of these groups will ensure practical implementation of strategic actions. Hywel Dda UHB's assurance of strategic plan delivery will be through the Digital Data and Innovation Committee (DDIC), which will delegate

responsibility to the Research and Innovation Sub Committee. A Research Quality and Sponsorship group will continue to ensure the research activities advanced by Hywel Dda UHB are safe, high-quality and impactful.

Partnerships are a key feature of this strategy and will be governed in the following ways:

- Where appropriate, regional partnerships will report into the Joint Committee for Swansea Bay UHB and Hywel Dda UHB, and the Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care.
- University partnerships will be routinely governed through DDIC, but to ensure adequate consideration of all aspects of collaborative work (i.e., research and development, enterprise and innovation, and learning, teaching and workforce), a new University Partnerships Forum will be convened.

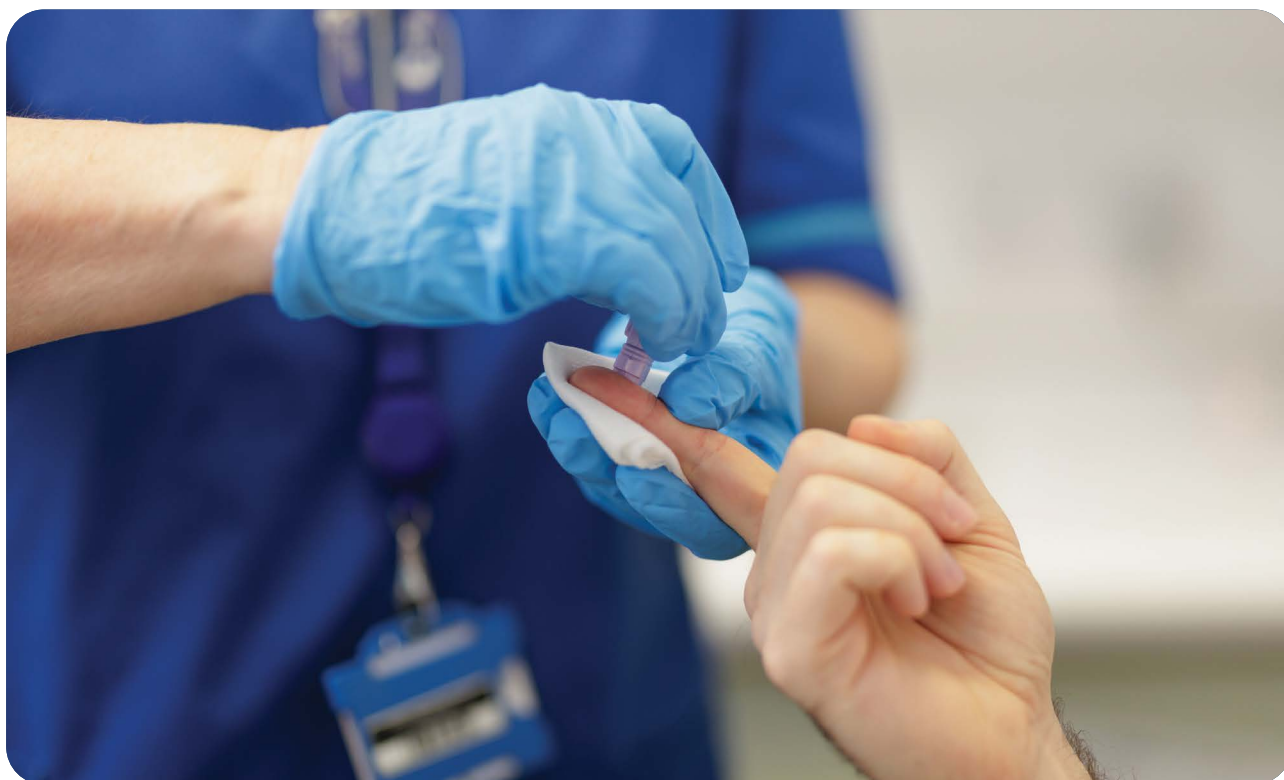
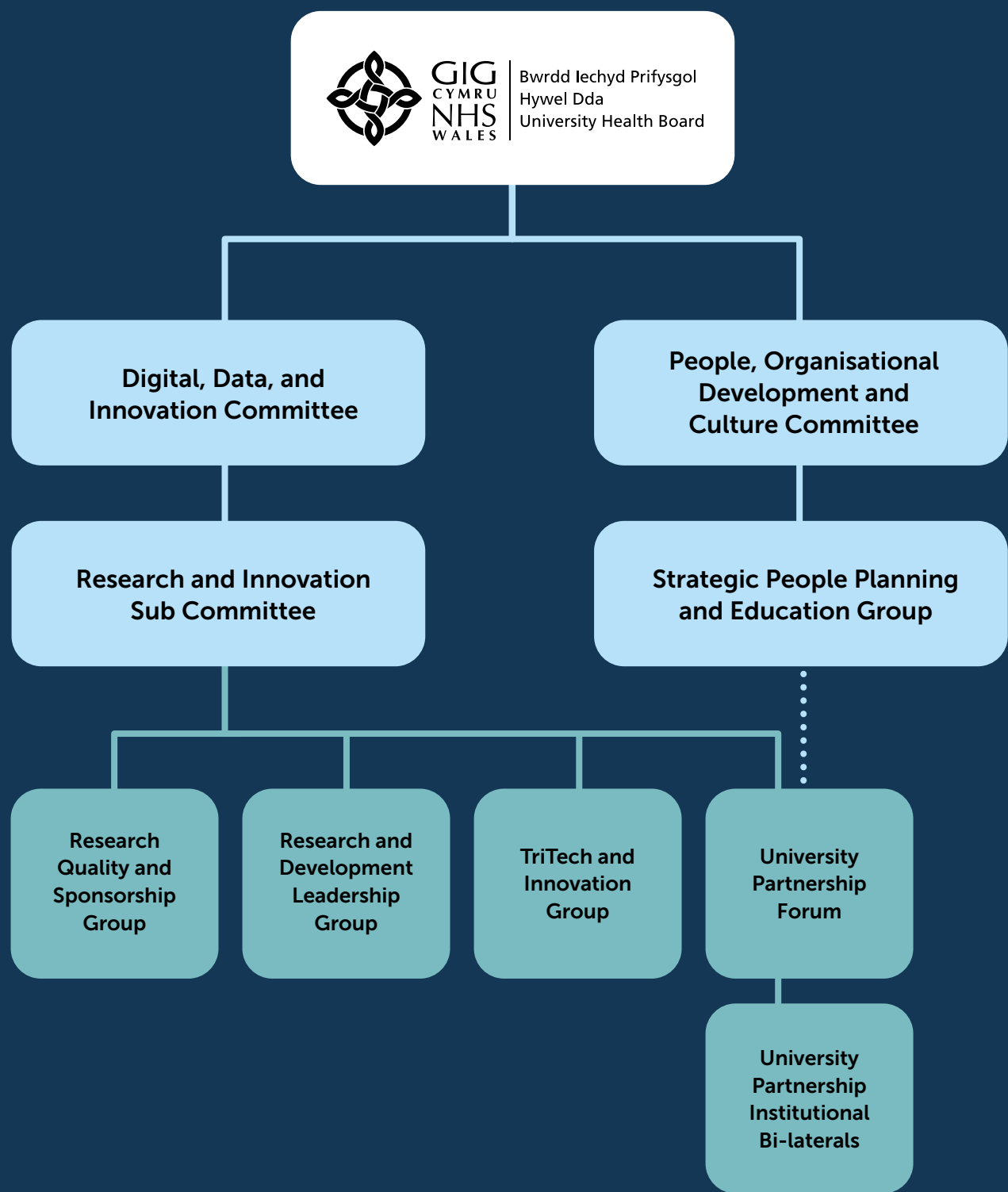


Figure 1 provides an overview of how we will manage and govern the delivery of the strategy. A delivery framework will be prepared following strategy launch, setting out clear measures and delivery deadline in all appropriate areas.

Figure 1 – Governance for Strategy Delivery







Ymchwil Iechyd
a Gofal Cymru
Health and Care
Research Wales



For further information please contact:

Research & Innovation Office
Dura Park, Yspitty Road,
Bynea, Llanelli, SA14 9TD

Email: HDd.Research-Development@wales.nhs.uk or tritech.hdd@wales.nhs.uk



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board