



Russell George AM,
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
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Ref: Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee inquiry into Research and Innovation in Wales: Alzheimer's Society Cymru response

Alzheimer's Society Cymru
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Dear Russell George AM,

I am pleased to respond on behalf of Alzheimer's Society Cymru to the [Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee inquiry into Research and Innovation in Wales](#). Alzheimer's Society is the UK's leading dementia charity. We provide information and support, improve care, fund research, and create lasting change for people affected by dementia. Alzheimer's Society Cymru welcomes the Committee's interest in the impact of research and innovation in Wales.

Included in this letter is a submission from the UK Dementia Research Institute (UKDRI) Cardiff, detailing their work and plans for the future.

Overview

- 1.1 Alzheimer's Society currently funds £2,303,000 worth of research across three institutions in Wales.
- 1.2 These funds cover a wide range of areas, including biomedical research, care research, quality of life research, and the search for a cure.
- 1.3 Alzheimer's Society also funds a £10,000 dissemination grant for the promotion of collaboration and integration in research.
- 1.4 Alongside the Medical Research Council and Alzheimer's Research UK, Alzheimer's Society funds the UK Dementia Research Institute (UKDRI), including a centre based in Cardiff University.

Research

- 1.5 As stated in the 'purpose of the consultation,' the Welsh Government says that there needs to be a "major increase" in research intended to help solve specific challenges facing Wales (challenge-led research).
- 1.6 Alzheimer's Society believes that Dementia & Social Care are two of the biggest challenges facing Wales, and that research across both areas, of both short and long term timescales, is necessary in order to tackle this challenge.
- 1.7 Alzheimer's Society currently funds £2,303,000 worth of research in Wales across Cardiff, Bangor and Cardiff Metropolitan Universities.
- 1.8 At Cardiff University, we fund thirteen research projects, at a cost of £1,800,000 across the following sectors: understanding underlying causes of dementia, searching for a cure, improving diagnosis and better care.

- 1.9 The work undertaken at Cardiff University covers cell biology, cross sectional MRI studies, rare variance, amyloid work, bio markers for dementia, anti-body research and genome typing & gene therapy.
- 1.10 At Bangor University, we fund two projects at a cost of £365,000 which covers the following sectors: understanding underlying causes of dementia and better care including care & services and cognitive rehabilitation in the early stages of dementia.
- 1.11 Bangor University also receive a £10,000 dissemination grant to help in the promotion of the work undertaken, and to aid in collaboration and sharing of knowledge across research centres.
- 1.12 At Cardiff Metropolitan, we fund one project at a cost of £138,000 which covers gene analysis.

UK Dementia Research Institute - Cardiff

- 1.13 With research starting from late 2017, the UK Dementia Research Institute aims to transform the way that dementia is diagnosed and treated, to bring us closer to the day we have a cure.¹
- 1.14 UK DRI researchers will tackle dementia from all angles, including exploring ways to manipulate the brain's natural defence mechanisms, as well as unravelling the roles of metabolism, sleep, bacteria in the gut, and much more.²
- 1.15 The DRI will cover dementia across the research spectrum, spanning Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Frontotemporal dementia, vascular dementia, Huntington's disease and beyond.³
- 1.16 To date, Centre Director, Professor Julie Williams and colleagues at the University have discovered 40 risk genes for dementia which implicate the innate immune response in determining a person's susceptibility to developing Alzheimer's disease.⁴

Innovation

- 1.17 Innovation is at the heart of everything we do at Alzheimer's Society. We are constantly looking out for new ways to improve the lives of people with dementia.
- 1.18 One example of this is the Live Well with dementia programme (LWwd). The programme is based on self-management principles. It aims to help people living with early stage dementia develop the understanding, skills and practical tools to empower and support them to take an active role in the management of their own health and well-being. This project was co-funded by the Lloyds Living Well Fund.
- 1.19 The programme was piloted in two areas across Wales, Gwent and South West Wales in order to test and evaluate the programme.
- 1.20 The LWwd programme has proved a success and we are now looking at rollout across the UK. As part of this, we will learn from the experience of the participants, staff and volunteers who have been part of the pilot and pathfinder study in order to increase the opportunities that programme participants have to influence its development further including potential opportunities for people living with dementia to be involved in supporting the delivery of the programme

¹ <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/research/researchers/UKDRI>

² Ibid

³ <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/dementia-research-institute/about-us>

⁴ Ibid

1.21 Additionally, we are currently working on the Dementia Connections: Uniting with General Practices project in Wales.

1.22 The project is involved with the design of solutions to assist General Practice to better meet the needs of people affected by dementia and to better understand pathways to further support. The project has engaged with a wide range of experts, stakeholders, General Practice employees and people affected by dementia to further understand what opportunities and difficulties there might be in relation to this area. Based on this, over 100 ideas for solutions were generated at a recent creative workshop and we now hope to develop one or more of these solutions for testing over the next couple of months, with the aim to roll out wider in the near future.

Conclusion

We welcome the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee's interest in the important topic of Research and Innovation in Wales. The evidence above was written in order to show the Committee that there is good collaboration between the University sector, private businesses and the third sector in both fields subject to the inquiry.

This submission was designed to give the committee a flavour of the work that we undertake as a society, both with the education and private sector and to aid in the stimulation of the committee's debate on this topic. Whilst the above evidence is by no means exhaustive, and is limited to the medical research sector, we hope that it will give the committee insight into what is possible in research and innovation.

We hope that evidence contained in this document is informative and will help the committee accurately examine the place of research and innovation in Wales.

If you require any other information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards



Sue Phelps

Country Director, Alzheimer's Society Cymru