

CardiffMet

cawr

Centre for Health, Activity
and Wellbeing Research

MetCaerdydd

cyigll

Canolfan Ymchwil ar gyfer
Iechyd, Gweithgarwch a Lles

Annual Report 2025/2026

This document is also available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg





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FOREWORD

Prof Diane Crone



Welcome

I am pleased to welcome you to the 5th annual report. This year has been another successful year in CAWR. We have continued to grow in profile within Wales and beyond. Our case studies and spotlight on where we have been in the world demonstrate this along with our rise in social media profile. This all contributes to growing our reach and influence in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing, purposeful activity and overall human and planetary health in Wales and the world.

This year we have focused on internal networking as our breadth of staff and students aligned to CAWR is large. Because of this breadth, we constantly need to ensure those important synergies across discipline are being made to enable our strong focus of interdisciplinary research to grow and develop.

Once again, our CAWR management team have been supported in their work, with volunteers from our Early Career Community. A huge thank you to Jodie Horsfall for co-leading our social media which has seen us reach over 500 followers on LinkedIn – congratulations Jodie! Also, Nia Evans, has once again supported us to create a visually appealing annual report. Thank you Nia for all your time and patience with us to create what is a fabulous report! We continue also to have all our sessions at the annual conference co-chaired by members of our early career community, enabling them to have valuable experiences and play a major part in our infrastructure and functions. Thanks to all of you for your time and help.





Networking

This has been another busy year of networking, both home and abroad! We have had the opportunity, through some external funding, to develop our international contacts to support with collaborative funding bids. Members of the CAWR team have been in Lithuania (Dr Mikel Mellick) working on some collaborative work with them for students, staff and research. Dr Szofia Szekeres was also successful at being awarded a place at the World Health Organisation's annual Summer School, which focused on systems approaches to physical activity promotion, in Nice last summer. Dr Britt Hallingberg also attended, representing CAWR and Cardiff Met the EuroHealthNet annual meeting and networking event, this year in Poland. Others have been visiting Spain, Ireland, Canada and Hungary spreading the CAWR work. We have also hosted visitors too, from Europe and North America. Last summer we also hosted a colleague from the University of Granada, Dr Javier Huertas-Delgado, who was seconded here for a three-month visit. This has resulted in further collaborations with Granada, including some academic papers and conference presentations. All of these activities are presented later in the report. But we hope that our hard work in this activity will result in some new projects with these international partners in the future.

Focus

This year's report focuses on our activities and achievements in CAWR, and the impact of these across the geographical areas in which we work, and for the populations they involve. We present our activities, and our research and innovation work through some varied case studies in our five key areas of expertise. We also provide an update on our structure and governance, the CAWR annual conference 2025, our networking events, Lunch Bytes, writing retreat, Early Career Community (ECC), and social media. We have also this year launched our new Cardiff Met website. It has taken some time to get this live, but thank you to the central comms team at Cardiff Met for your support to get this over the line.

The website link is here: [Centre for Health, Activity and Well-being Research | Cardiff Metropolitan University](#).

Excellence

We continue to focus on high quality impactful research, and in developing and maintaining a supportive research environment for all our CAWR members from early career through to established senior researchers. We are committed to creating and maintaining a conducive research culture, and have continued to organise our popular lunchbyte seminars, early career cafe socials, a networking seminar focusing on women's health, and an invited symposium on human and planetary health. All these events have fostered cross sector, transdisciplinary approaches to address these global challenges. Our focus this year has been to consider the impact of our CAWR work on the communities in which we work and how this can be implemented into policy and practice to really 'make a difference'.

Support

To enable us to be successful we have benefited from support from senior management in the School of Sport and Health Sciences (CSSHS), our colleagues in Research, Enterprise and Innovation Services, from our CSSHS support staff team and from the University as a whole. Whilst this year has continued to be financially challenging, we have benefited from a strong commitment from CAWR colleagues to utilise what we have to maximum benefit. As such we have still managed to a host writing retreat, networking events and a conference despite these limitations.

CAWR Family

CAWR would be nothing without the amazing team and members who make it what it is. I am pleased to be able to say that we have secured a permanent contract for Dr Zsafia Szekeres after working with CAWR for nearly 5 years. We are also working to ensure extensions to employment for our other fixed term staff, through successfully securing further income from external projects. Our core CAWR team of Dr's Paul Sellars, Zsafia Szekeres, Sarah Brown and Tabitha Dickson along with the CAWR management team and our CAWR members, enable us to continue with our growth and the impactful work that we do, within our local and global communities in which we work. I shall sign off this foreword by saying a big thank you once again to everyone who has made this fifth year of CAWR a huge success, we would be nothing without the support of each other.



AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Vision

Our vision is to be a world-leading transdisciplinary research centre working with a diverse range of communities that makes a difference to people's health and wellbeing across the lifespan.

Focus

CAWR is in the School of Sport and Health Sciences, and aligns to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals related to good health, education, inequalities and climate change. It draws specifically from staff interests and expertise from across the School of Sport and Health Sciences, the School of Education and Social Policy, and the School of Management. However, CAWR is pan University in its approach to problem solving which includes collaborations across other Schools including Art and Design and Technology, and Research and Innovation Services. We have strong links with other research centres and expertise from across the UK and internationally.

Context of our Mission

CAWR sits within a context of key policy drivers within Wales, the UK and internationally that relate to public health and wellbeing at individual, community, and societal levels. We align our work with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Wales Act (2015) and the seven wellbeing goals identified in the Act, and recognise the importance of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals in our focus and mission.

In line with the current and far-reaching local and global political agenda of Wales, the UK, and internationally, the Centre aims to address some of society's biggest challenges including:

- Prevention, treatment and management of disease
- Physical activity and exercise promotion
- Lifestyle Behaviours and Inequality
- Health, well-being and quality of life across the lifespan
- Application of psychology to the improvement of human health, well-being and performance, with a focus on vulnerable and under-served groups



CAWR Approach

To address these challenges CAWR's approach is to:

- Develop innovative solutions and sustainable interventions;
- Adopt inclusive, life course approaches;
- Assume a socio-ecological perspective;
- Use systems-based approaches for health improvement/health and wellbeing;
- Explore and understand mechanisms underpinning health and human behaviour and function; and
- Adopt multi- and inter-disciplinary approaches.

CAWR Aims and Objectives

CAWR is the leading Centre in Wales for health, activity, and wellbeing research. To realise this aim we work in partnership to achieve the following objectives:

- To draw together people and organisations from across Cardiff Met and externally to develop, promote and improve research and innovation in health, activity, and wellbeing
- To promote research and innovation through interdisciplinary working across our areas of expertise, pan-university with other research centres in Cardiff Met
- Capitalise on the transdisciplinary nature of CAWR to secure new income in both the areas of research and innovation.
- To sustain and grow the CAWR Early Career Community.
- Develop and promote research and innovation leadership opportunities for researchers of all stages of their career.
- To establish a sustainable and financially secure research centre in the future.
- Increase the profile of CAWR in research and innovation in health, activity, and wellbeing in the local community, Wales and internationally.
- To develop and implement a portfolio of postgraduate research and taught course degree provision which profiles the unique and distinct scope of CAWR's research.



OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Our management team meets monthly for business and administrative planning, and to manage the direction and activities of CAWR. We have 5 Early Career Community members who are part of our management team, who play a key role in our management structure, strategic development and centre activities/events. Our volunteers are also invited to attend and contribute to these meetings when they can. We have an annual strategic away day, held after our conference where we meet and review the years activities, highlight successes and plan for 2026-2027. The structure and personnel are presented across the following pages.

Director

Professor Diane Crone



Group Leads

Public Health & Wellbeing (PHWB)

Co-leads:
Dr Britt Hallingberg & Dr Kate Isherwood



Applied Psychology (AP)

Co-leads:
Dr Christine McKnight & Dr Heidi Seage



Applied Exercise Science (AES)

Lead:
Dr Rachel Lord



Wellbeing in Demanding Environments (WiDE)

Co-leads:
Prof Steve Mellalieu & Dr Mike Mellick



Physical Health Education for Lifelong Learning (PHELL)

Co-leads:
Dr Anna Bryant & Dr David Brown



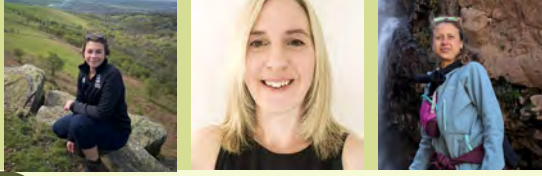


OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM



Networking and Lunchbyte Activities

Networking & Lunchbyte Activities Co-leads
Drs Britt Hallingberg | Sarah Brown | Zsafia Szekeres



Early Career Community

Early Career Community Lead
Dr Tabitha Dickson



Social Media

Social Media Co-leads
Dr Tabitha Dickson | Jodie Horsfall



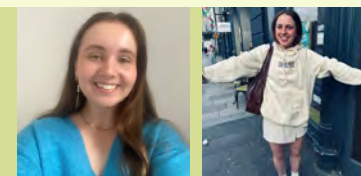
CSM & CSESP Representatives

Cardiff School of Management Representative
Prof Niki Bolton
Cardiff School of Education and Social Policy Representative
Dr Laura Rees-Davies



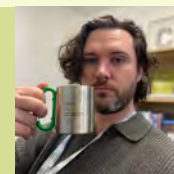
Student Volunteers

Research Student Volunteers
Jodie Horsfall | Nia Evans



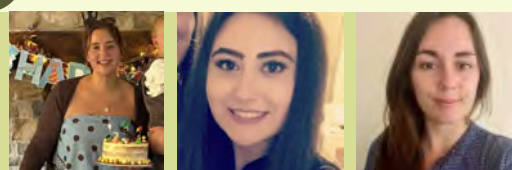
RA Lead

Research Associate Lead
Dr Paul Sellars



RIES Support

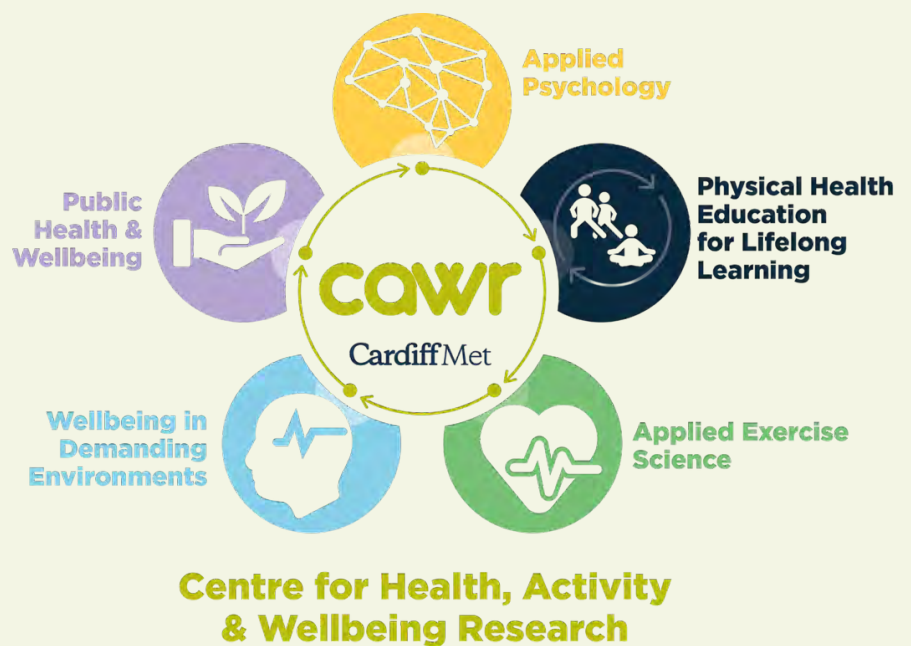
Laura Lind | Research and Innovation Officer
Becky Mahoney | Research and Innovation Administrator
Chloe Hexter | Research and Innovation Officer
Denise West | Business Support Officer





ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout 2025-2026 CAWR members have continued pioneering research through innovative and transdisciplinary methods. Through this work we have strengthened partnerships, including with clinicians and health professionals from primary and secondary care, health boards and other statutory bodies, the third sector, education bodies, the government, and with the specific communities in which we work. We have several areas of work within CAWR and have included multiple case studies which demonstrate our activity in these areas. Our areas of expertise are presented in the diagram below. All examples presented within this report centre around the health and wellbeing of the individuals and communities in which they are located. The list of case studies included in this report are detailed at the foot of this page.



Case studies:

- Implementing the global framework on well-being at country level: Policy pathways
- The half-life of Pernicious Anaemia – why listening to patient voices matter
- InVisible Dances: surfacing practitioner learning from improvised dance encounters with young people accessing Tŷ Hafan children's hospice
- High-intensity interval training versus moderate intensity steady state training in cardiac rehabilitation: HITT v MISS UK
- Developing and implementing a psychological load measure in academy football
- Transforming conversations about reproductive health in Cystic Fibrosis care
- Different roads to the same door: gendered pathways into secure forensic mental health care

Implementing the global framework on well-being at country level: Policy pathways



Dr Kate Isherwood, Professor Diane Crone, Dr Paul Sellars, Professor Jenny Mercer, Professor Christopher Wallis, Alba Godfrey & Dr Rachel Sumner.

Background

A Wellbeing Economy is one where nations prioritise population health, inclusive design, environmental sustainability and long-term population resilience, rather than measuring progress solely through GDP. Governments and Ministries of Health have a critical leadership role in driving this transformation, not only as policy-makers but also as advocates, collaborators and community engagers.

Project Objectives

As such in June 2023, CAWR were approached by EuroHealth Net who were working with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to produce policy briefs focusing on five key objectives to help Ministries of Health build a Wellbeing Economy.

The guide – Implementing the Global Framework on Well-being at Country Level: Policy Pathways – addresses what the WHO describes as a global “poly-crisis”: the combined and overlapping pressures of climate change, widening social inequalities, environmental degradation and political instability. It summarises actions from the Geneva Charter of Wellbeing, providing ministries of health with strategic directions to champion change to:

1. Nurture Planet Earth and its ecosystems
2. Design social protection and welfare systems based on equity and inclusion.
3. Design equitable economies that serve human development
4. Promote universal health coverage
5. Promote equitable digital systems
6. Measure and monitor well-being.

CAWR authored chapter one ‘Nurturing Planet Earth and its ecosystems’ where the link between human health and the natural environment was explored, setting out practical, evidence-based steps, Ministers of Health and international policy makers can take to protect both their people and the planet.



Purpose

CAWR’s involvement highlights Cardiff Met’s growing international reputation for applied research that informs global policy and delivers tangible impact beyond academia. By contributing to this publication, CAWR have helped shape guidance that will support countries into rethinking how societies measure success – placing wellbeing at the heart of decision-making.

For more information on Euro Health Net please see:

<https://eurohealthnet.eu/about-us/mission-and-vision/>

The full report is available here:

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/97892401>

The half-life of Pernicious Anaemia - why listening to patient voices matter

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Dr Heidi Seage, Hannah Marshall, Dr Christine McKnight and Prof Delyth James.

Background

Pernicious anaemia (PA) is a chronic autoimmune condition that can significantly impair wellbeing and daily functioning. Although often framed as a treatable condition managed with routine vitamin B12 injections, this view overlooks ongoing patient experiences. Many individuals continue to report persistent symptoms, including fatigue and cognitive difficulties, despite treatment, highlighting a gap between biomedical management and living experience.

Project Considerations

Building on a programme of research into patient experiences of PA this project aims to:

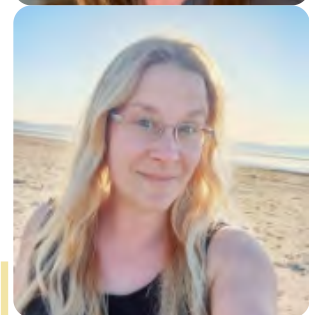
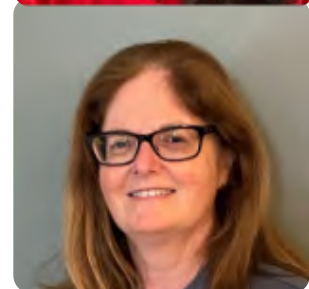
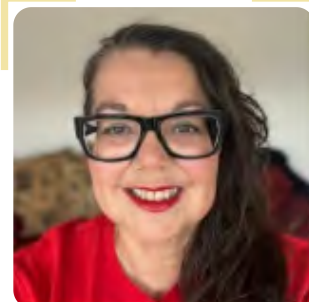
1. Explore lived experiences of PA symptoms prior to diagnosis;
2. Understand how individuals manage ongoing symptoms following treatment; and
3. Generate evidence to inform more responsive, patient-centred care and improved clinical recognition of PA.

Method

Participants with a diagnosis of PA were recruited to take part in semi-structured interviews (n=5). Data were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

Purpose

Findings highlight a prolonged and often distressing diagnostic journey, where symptoms are frequently misattributed to psychological causes, leaving patients feeling unheard. Although B12 treatment reduces symptom severity, it does not fully resolve them, with many experiencing persistent or cyclical symptoms. Over time, patients develop "illness literacy," enabling them to self-manage care and adapt their lifestyles. We are pleased to be sharing this research at the B12 Alliance's Parliamentary Reception in September, contributing to discussions on improving patient-centred care and diagnostic practice.



InVisible Dances: surfacing practitioner learning from improvised dance encounters with young people accessing Tŷ Hafan children's hospice.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Heidi Wilson, Sally Varrall and Esther KilBride.

Background

InVisible Dances received seed funding from Arts Council Wales Create programme. The project was designed and realised by experienced community dance practitioners Sally Varrall and Esther KilBride. It aimed to make visible meaningful moments of creative expression and to amplify children's artistic voices through capturing their dances on film. The project positioned the children as artists, the practitioners as facilitators with the resulting films belonging to the children and their families.

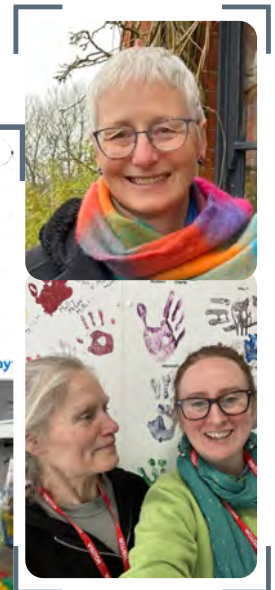
Project Objectives

Embedded into the project design was a researcher/evaluator to support the practitioners to reflect on their learning and its impact on practice development, with four objectives:

- To conduct four supported reflection sessions across the life of the project (5 months);
- To surface practitioner experiences and therefore learning through discussion;
- To explore inter-disciplinary theoretical frameworks (e.g. health care, dance improvisation, pedagogy) to deepen understanding of practitioner experiences;
- To share learning with the wider dance community and other interested parties.

Method

A qualitative approach in the form of supported reflective practice sessions was used to surface learning. The process was largely intuitive through providing protected space and time to reflect in response to questions or prompts from the researcher/evaluator. A loose framework was used borrowed from Borton (1970) characterised as 'what', 'so what' and 'now what'. Digital audio recordings of each session were transcribed and subjected to inductive thematic analysis. Arising themes were aligned to existing theoretical frameworks from a range of disciplines.



Purpose

Both dance practitioners described their approach as 'person-centered'. In seeking to understand more about this framing, we drew on literature from person-centred practices in health care and education. This led to literature on care aesthetics, attunement and embodied agency. From dance and performance studies, we explored dance improvisation and the role of soft skills in inter-personal dance practice. We considered definitions of creativity and creative dispositions and how engagement might be recognised in people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

High-intensity interval training versus moderate intensity steady state training in cardiac rehabilitation: HITT v MISS UK

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Dr Brian Begg and Dr Rachel Lord

Background

For decades, moderate intensity continuous training (MISS) was recommended in UK cardiac rehabilitation. However, studies have shown moderate intensity exercise might not meaningfully increase cardiorespiratory fitness, an important clinical outcome linked to lower mortality and better quality of life. High-intensity interval training (HIIT), involving repeated bursts of vigorous exercise interspersed with periods of recovery, has been suggested to be a more effective alternative, but had not been compared to MISS in a large scale randomized controlled trial.

Project Objectives

The project compared the effectiveness of HIIT and MISS exercise training for improving cardiorespiratory fitness in patients participating in cardiac rehabilitation.

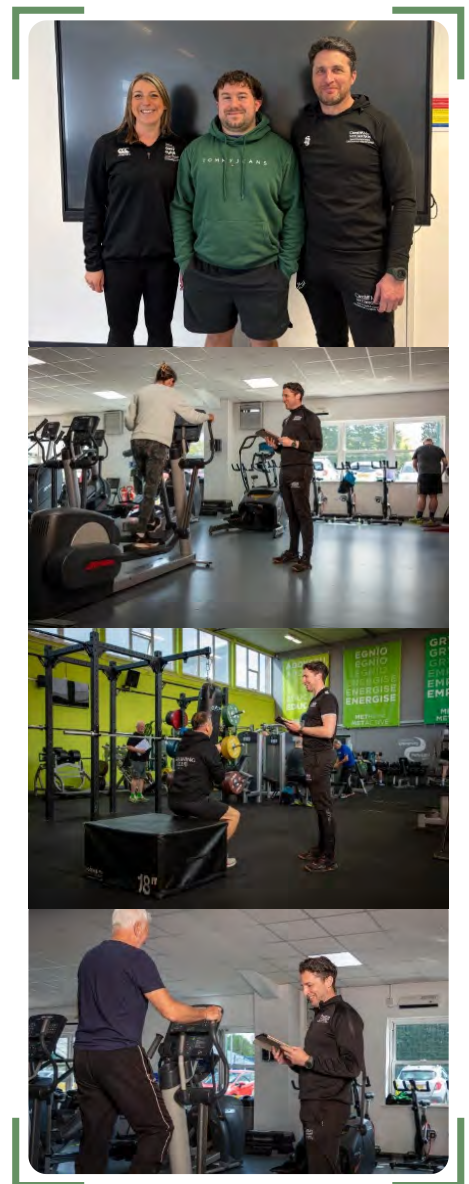
Method

We conducted a multi-centre randomized controlled trial, recruiting 382 patients from 6 outpatient cardiac rehabilitation centres. Participants were randomized to twice-weekly HIIT (n = 187) or MISS (n = 195) for 8 weeks. The primary outcome was the change in cardiorespiratory fitness at 8 week follow-up. Secondary outcomes included cardiovascular disease risk markers and health-related quality of life.

Purpose

High intensity exercise improved cardiorespiratory fitness more compared to moderate intensity training. This improvement in fitness from HIIT is associated with a 15% reduction in mortality. Participants who completed HIIT had meaningful improvements in health-related quality of life and key cardiovascular risk markers.

This research led to the Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Cardiac Rehabilitation (ACPICR) and British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR), recommending the use of HIIT in cardiac rehabilitation in the UK within their clinical standards representing a broadening of exercise prescription approaches beyond traditional moderate-intensity exercise.



Developing and implementing a psychological load measure in academy football



Professor Owen Thomas, Scarlett Kent, Professor Stephen Mellalieu, Dr Ryland Morgans and Dr Molly McCarthy-Ryan



Background

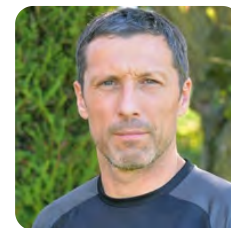
Through a partnership between the WiDE Research Group and Brentford FC, PhD researcher Scarlett Kent is investigating psychological load in academy football. Although physical training loads are routinely monitored in elite sport, psychological demands remain less well understood. This research addresses a significant gap by developing evidence-based approaches to understanding and assessing psychological load, with the aim of supporting athlete wellbeing and performance in elite youth football environments.

Project Objectives

- To advance understanding of psychological load in academy football;
- co-design and develop a practical, context-specific measure of psychological load;
- provide practitioners with an evidence-based tool to monitor psychological demands and inform decisions that support player wellbeing, development, and performance.

Method

The project comprises three interconnected studies. A scoping review systematically maps the literature on psychological load in sport, identifying key concepts and research gaps. Findings informed an iterative co-design process involving academy stakeholders to develop and refine a psychological load measure tailored to academy football. The measure has now been implemented within Brentford FC's academy, where data collection is underway as part of a prospective longitudinal study examining psychological load over time and its relationship with athlete wellbeing and performance.



Purpose

This research aims to provide the first practitioner-informed framework for assessing psychological load within academy football. By developing, implementing, and evaluating a practical monitoring tool, the project enables a better understanding of the psychological demands experienced by young athletes. The findings will support evidence-based approaches to player welfare, development, and performance while demonstrating the impact of collaborative research between academia and professional sport.

Transforming conversations about reproductive health in Cystic Fibrosis care



Dr Rhiannon Phillips and Dr Sarah Brown



Background

Advances in cystic fibrosis (CF) care, including widespread access to Cystic Fibrosis Transmembrane Conductance Regulator (CFTR) modulators, have transformed life expectancy and reproductive opportunities for women with CF. However, evidence indicates ongoing unmet needs for reproductive health information and shared decision-making support. This work sits within the Cystic Fibrosis Trust-funded MATRIARCH Strategic Research Centre (SRC), an interdisciplinary UK-US collaboration established to improve maternal, infant, reproductive and child health outcomes in CF through research, evidence generation, and the development of accessible patient-centred resources.

Project Objectives

As part of MATRIARCH, Cardiff Metropolitan University and the All Wales Adult Cystic Fibrosis Centre are leading the development of a reproductive health shared decision-making intervention for adolescents and young women with CF. We are working with people with the CF community and world-leading experts at Imperial College London, The Royal Brompton Hospital, and the University of Pittsburgh to support shared decision-making around reproductive health. The next stage in our research is to adapt and extend MyVoice:CF - an interactive online reproductive health decision aid developed by our colleagues in the US - for the UK setting and tailor it for adolescents and young women. We will be investigating how the MyVoice:CF decision aid could be embedded in routine care to promote shared decision-making and enhance confidence among people with CF, families and healthcare professionals in discussing reproductive health topics.

Method

The project adopts a co-production methodology involving women with CF, parents and caregivers, multidisciplinary clinicians, researchers and charity partners. Building on previous work evaluating MyVoice:CF, qualitative interviews and stakeholder engagement activities will explore the experiences, priorities and resource needs of adolescent and young adult women with CF. Findings are being used to inform the adaptation and development of age-appropriate decision-support tools. We will also be exploring how and when the decision aid could be used in the NHS CF care pathway to enable timely and effective reproductive health shared decision-making to take place. Our iterative design process ensures that the project outputs are evidence-based, clinically relevant and acceptable to end users

Purpose

The purpose of this work is to support informed reproductive health decision-making from adolescence onwards, recognising that questions about fertility, contraception, relationships and future family-building often emerge early. Research has shown that adolescents and young women with CF value MyVoice:CF as a tool that facilitates conversations with families and healthcare professionals and supports self-advocacy. Through the international and interdisciplinary MATRIARCH collaboration, this programme will generate practical resources that enable women with CF to make informed choices and access person-centred reproductive healthcare throughout their lives.

**Cystic
Fibrosis Trust**

**MATRIARCH SRC - MATeRnal
InfAnt Reproductive & Child
Health in CF**

Different roads to the same door: gendered pathways into secure forensic mental health care



Dr Andy Watt, Dr Dan Lawrence, Dr Joe Marcel-Davies and Dr Christine McKnight

Background

Secure forensic mental health services support individuals whose mental health needs intersect with risk to themselves or others. Pathways into these settings are complex and gendered, with men and women experiencing different routes and needs. However, services often respond similarly to both groups, relying on models developed around men's needs. Recognising these differences is crucial to ensure equitable access, tailor interventions, and inform policy and practice within secure care.

Project Objectives

This study aimed to explore gender differences in pathways into secure forensic mental health care, examining how men and women are assessed, admitted, and managed. It seeks to identify key factors influencing these routes, including risk, clinical need, and service responses, and to highlight implications for equity, practice, and policy development within secure care systems.

Method

A qualitative study used semi-structured interviews with 12 forensic clinicians from a medium secure service. Interviews lasted 30–40 minutes, were conducted face-to-face or via Teams, and were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised. Data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework. Ethical approval was obtained from both university and organisational review committees.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore clinicians' understanding of how men and women enter secure forensic mental health services and whether these pathways differ by gender.

It aims to examine how staff interpret three key factors: trauma, diagnosis, and risk thresholds and how these interpretations may be shaped by gendered assumptions. By doing this, the study seeks to identify potential biases and gaps in knowledge, and to use these insights to inform more accurate assessments and the development of gender sensitive, trauma informed care.





OUR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Our activities in 2025-2026 have brought together researchers, policymakers, practitioners and students to help support the health and wellbeing of people in Wales and beyond through innovative research, interdisciplinary collaboration, networking and dialogue. These events have helped to establish new connections and collaborations and consolidate existing partnerships. We have organised a range of activities and events which are featured in this section.

Celebration of Research and Innovation Annual Conference

Our 2025 CAWR conference took place on Wednesday 25th June. Ninety six delegates registered to attend the day – a record number for our annual conference to date! Attendees ranged from staff and students from across Cardiff Met, and also many delegates from outside of Cardiff Met including from the local Health Boards, third sector organisations, and other Wales based organisations. Once again our conference format included two keynote presentations including Dr Izzy Moore from Cardiff Metropolitan University and Dr Marc Harris from NHS Horizons.

The conference also included research presentations from each of the areas of expertise within CAWR from a range of researchers from well-established to early career. We concluded the conference with a discussion which included the key note speakers and members of CAWR. Feedback from the day was extremely positive! The Conference was expertly organised by a conference organising committee drawn from members of our CAWR Early Career Community Steering Group.





Research Networking Updates

This year, we organised an opportunity for CAWR members to meet each other and understand potential synergies in the area of women's health. This emerging and growing area of research draws from numerous disciplines from researchers across Cardiff Met. We organised a Research Networking Seminar in May 2026, which 'sold out' with over 40 attendees from across the university, bringing together a host of multi-disciplinary researchers to connect and synergise. This event was facilitated by Drs Britt Hallingberg, Sarah Brown and Zsafia Szekeres. It focused conversation on key themes of interest to participants, resulting in some new potential collaboration, linking new staff into CAWR and its focus and building connections with external partners and organisations.

CAWR also supported other activity within our areas of expertise from PHWB, PHELL, WiDE, Applied Exercise Science and Applied Psychology colleagues.



**Physical Health
Education
for Lifelong
Learning**

The Physical Education, Health and Lifelong Learning (PHELL) group, co-led by Professor David Brown (CSSHS) and Dr Anna Bryant (CSESP), has had a productive year, fostering collaboration, research dissemination, and professional engagement across the physical education and physical literacy community. Key activities included a series of joint seminars with Edith Cowan University, featuring presentations on Physical Education and Sport-Focused Degree Programmes: An Exploration of Symbolic Boundaries and Policy Negotiations by Ellen Jones. The group also facilitated knowledge exchange through a presentation on the Tŷ Hafan InVisible Dances project, delivered by Heidi Wilson (Cardiff Met), Sally Varrall, and Esther Killbride from Tŷ Hafan.

Dr Amy Rees from the Royal Academy of Dance shared findings from her PhD research, prompting a valuable discussion on future publication opportunities relating to the critical investigation of the development and implementation of a Primary School Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme (PLTP) facilitated through multi-stakeholder collaboration. In addition, PHELL has been instrumental in organising a Secondary Head of Physical Education Conference (June 2026) focused on the sharing of good practice. Hosted at Cardiff Metropolitan University's Cyncoed campus, the event is being led by Dr Fiona Heath-Diffey, Rhys Lloyd and Dr Anna Bryant, further strengthening links between research, policy, and educational practice.

Dr. George Jennings and Dr. Zsafia Szekeres have developed the Movement Inspired by Martial arts (MIMA) pilot project in Cardiff. MIMA borrows and adapts movements taken from a range of martial arts for older adults and women in multicultural, underserved communities (see Jennings & Zsafia Szekeres 2025). The project is funded by the National Lottery for All Wales and the SPIN-D Dementia Network+ and collaborates with Women Connect First and NHS movement coach team. Dr Jennings and Professor Brown have also been developing a project based in clubs in the South Wales area with a scholar practitioner Mr Jungjoo Yun involving the use of multiple Taekwondo as a platform for the social inclusion of asylum seekers and immigrants (see Yun, Brown, & Jennings 2026; Yun & Brown, 2025). Professor Brown delivered a keynote speech entitled; Plus ça change...? Revisiting the body politic(s) in and through movement in a multipolar political landscape at the Edith Cowan University hosted AIESEP specialist seminar 2025 Body politics in and through movement. Professor Brown, Nick Young and Greg Dainty have been working alongside colleagues from Edith Cowan University on a pilot phase of the outdoor learning project that is exploring the shifting role and function of outdoor learning in the fields of outdoor education, adventure recreation, sport and uniformed services in Western Australia and Wales respectively.

**Public
Health &
Wellbeing**



The Public Health and Wellbeing (PHWB) theme has organised monthly seminars which have provided an opportunity for early career researchers to showcase and discuss their research activities. These included presentations from WGSSS students: Rebecca Chamberlain (presented on her experiences working with Welsh Government as a WGSSS placement researcher), Aisling Pigott (seeking to understand the development of disordered eating in paediatric diabetes care), Erin Howard-Cook (exploring how sport can be used to improve social and emotional learning) and Jodie Horsfall (exploring the role of leisure in supporting holistic care and performance excellence among adolescent football academy players)



**Applied
Psychology**

The Applied Psychology (AP) Research and Innovation (R&I) Group has delivered a range of activities this academic year aimed at supporting research development and scholarly engagement. Three research-focused talks were provided: Dr Mike Wells presented work on refugees and asylum seekers, Dr Nick Perham delivered a session on research publications, and Dr Deiniol Skillicorn explored the impact of neoliberalism on wellbeing. In addition to these talks, the group organised a writing retreat to support academic writing and productivity, alongside a series of update meetings to facilitate ongoing collaboration and communication among members.

The Applied Exercise Science (AES) theme held a networking session to discuss research collaboration opportunities. Key themes emerged around physical activity interventions across different populations, and female health across the lifespan. This led to the theme of Women's Health being selected for our Research Networking Seminar in semester 2. Dr Izzy Moore hosted Prof Kay Crossley in May.



**Applied Exercise
Science**

18



Networking and Knowledge Lunch Byte Events

On November 19th CAWR hosted a Networking seminar for internal staff and students providing facilitated discussion around key areas of: sexual health, community partnerships and innovation, social and emotional development in physical education as well as technology and design for health. Over 15 people attended this event from across CCSHS, CSM and CSESP.

In semester 2 we organised a Women's Health Research Networking Seminar. Over 40 staff and students from Cardiff Met attended this event and 10 presentations were delivered which featured current projects being led by early and mid-career researchers. This feedback event will inform CAWR's strategic planning moving forward.



Early Career Community



CAWR's Early Career Community (ECC) provides a supportive and welcoming environment for individuals who share CAWR's research interests and are at an early stage in their academic careers. Over the past year, the ECC has continued to foster connection and peer support through a series of bi-monthly drop-in coffee meet-ups. These sessions are strategically scheduled immediately after the monthly CAWR management meeting, enabling members of the management team to engage directly with the Early Career Community and strengthen connections across career stages.

The ECC is guided by a Steering Group comprising both PhD students and postdoctoral researchers, ensuring that activities remain relevant and responsive to early career needs. Membership is open and inclusive, extending beyond the University to include colleagues from partner organisations such as local Health Boards, as well as early career researchers from other institutions.

Importantly, the ECC also maintains strong ongoing relationships with alumni. Members who have transitioned into full-time roles following their PhD continue to attend sessions, contributing to a sustained and connected network that supports collaboration, mentorship, and knowledge exchange across the wider CAWR community.

Writing Retreats

Each year CAWR offer Cardiff Met researchers (doctoral students and staff) the opportunity to spend the day writing in a supportive and inspiring environment.

This year we hosted an away day, off site event at the Llanishen and Lisvane Reservoir. The day was well attended by around 15 people from all areas of CAWR's research interests. We benefit from a good mix of researchers, from early career researchers (staff and doctorate students) to more established mid/late career staff, including Readers and Professors.

We continue to have representation that spans across the whole of the university where members are located. These days always include some informal networking opportunities across areas of research expertise which is warmly welcomed by attendees. This year's event was also attended by a visiting PhD student for the University of Alicante, Jorge Becerra Arroyo.





Social Media

Over the past year, CAWR has continued to strengthen and expand its social media presence. Activity is led by Dr Tabitha Dickson, with support from ECC member and PhD candidate Jodie Horsfall. LinkedIn remains our primary platform for disseminating activity, with our page growing to over 500 followers during this period.

Throughout the year, Tabitha and Jodie have facilitated a consistent and engaging stream of content that reflects the breadth of work across CAWR. This has included sharing research outputs such as publications, promoting events, highlighting national and international travel and collaboration, and celebrating team achievements. The platform has also been key in showcasing the contributions of both senior and early career colleagues, supporting visibility and engagement across our network.

In addition to our social media activity, CAWR launched a newly designed website this year. The site enhances our external profile by providing a clear and accessible overview of our areas of expertise, upcoming events, partners, and global networks.





CAWR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

2025 / 2026



Dr Javier Huertas-Delgado
Univeristy of Granada, Spain.

'My research stay at Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Centre for Health, Activity and Wellbeing Research (CAWR) was motivated by my interest in learning from an internationally recognised research group working on physical activity promotion, active travel, and health education. I believed that working within CAWR would strengthen international collaboration between researchers from Wales and Spain.'

During the three-month stay, I participated in research meetings, seminars, and conferences while collaborating with several CAWR research team members. I worked on scientific writing, research dissemination, and the development of projects related to active travel to school, motivation, and healthy behaviours in children and adolescents. I also presented part of the work currently being developed at the University of Granada and exchanged experiences with researchers and public health professionals. In addition, I had the opportunity to travel around Wales and discover a beautiful country full of kind and welcoming people.

The experience provided valuable scientific, professional, and personal growth. I improved my research and academic writing skills, learned new collaborative methodologies, and established strong international research networks.

The next step for the collaboration between the University of Granada and CAWR will be the development of joint international projects, staff and student mobility opportunities, and future applications for European and UK-Spain collaborative funding schemes.

I am truly happy with my decision to choose Cardiff for my senior research stay, and I look forward to meeting all the wonderful people there again. I can only say: diolch yn fawr iawn.'





CAWR INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

2025 / 2026



Prof Bonnie Barber
Griffith University, Australia.



Prof Bonnie Barber was a Dean (Research) for six years and is currently Acting Dean (Academic) within the Health Group at Griffith University. Bonnie Barber is an internationally recognised educational and developmental psychologist specialising in youth engagement, achievement, and wellbeing. Her expertise is reflected in an extensive body of highly cited academic scholarship as well as in the use of her work in policy development contexts. Bonnie visited CAWR at Cardiff Met between the 9th-12th of June 2025 and during this time joined us for one of our monthly management meetings and as a guest at one of our bi-monthly ECC Cafés.



Universitat d'Alacant
Universidad de Alicante

Jorge Becerra Arroyo
University of Alicante, Spain.

'From the very beginning of my research stay at Cardiff Metropolitan University, I felt incredibly welcomed by the entire CAWR team, especially by Prof Diane Crone, whose kindness and support made me feel part of the group from day one.

My visit proved an invaluable opportunity to establish research connections that will contribute to my future academic career. It also allowed me to compare teaching approaches and curricula between the UK and Spain, broadening my perspective on higher education. During my stay, I had the opportunity to contribute to several psychology-related workshops and engage with colleagues across different areas of expertise.

I am especially grateful for the many invitations to seminars, meetings, and social activities organised by CAWR. These experiences certainly enabled me to get to know the team in depth, learn about their diverse research interests, and begin planning future collaborative projects.

Under the supervision of Prof Nicola Bowes, I have gained a much broader understanding of academic work and research culture in the UK. This experience has also strengthened the relationship between the University of Alicante and Cardiff Metropolitan University, creating a solid foundation for future collaboration between our institutions.

Overall, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone at CAWR for their generosity, support, and encouragement throughout my visit. This research stay has provided me with valuable learning opportunities, meaningful professional connections, and memorable experiences that will have a lasting impact on my academic and personal development.'



WHAT OUR CAWR MEMBERS SAY



Sherina Lowe
ESRC Funded PhD Student

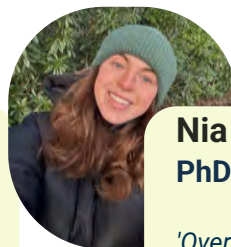
'I was delighted to be asked to co-chair a session at the CAWR Annual Conference. As this was something I'd never done before, I was a little nervous to begin with, but everyone was so welcoming and friendly that I felt at ease. It was a lovely atmosphere to be a part of. I really enjoyed listening to the presenters and learning more about the breadth of research taking place throughout CAWR. It gave me a much better understanding of the work being carried out and the supportive research community that CAWR has created. It was great to hear about how they support early-career researchers too!'

'I also had the opportunity to attend one of the CAWR writing retreats, which was held at a beautiful venue. Having the space to work alongside like-minded people and to hold myself accountable for the work I wanted to achieve was really valuable. It gave me the focus I needed, and I managed to complete everything I'd set out to do, so it definitely felt like a win for me. I'm so pleased to have had these opportunities. Not only have they given me valuable experience and a real confidence boost, but they've also added to my professional development and given me something extra to include on my CV. As a PhD student, I find opportunities like these incredibly valuable, and I'm very grateful to have been involved.'



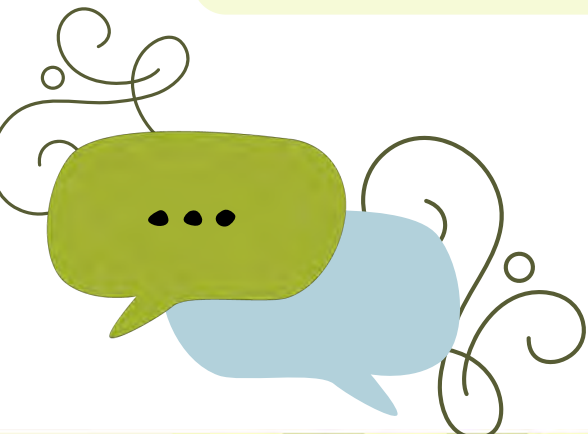
Dan Martin
Senior Lecturer in Sports Rehabilitation

'I have really valued the opportunity to engage with CAWR activities over the past few years. As an early career researcher, the events and writing retreats provided supportive, collegiate spaces, to connect with colleagues, share ideas, and develop research activity in a constructive environment. I am so grateful for the opportunity to connect with fellow researchers in similar positions to myself.'



Nia Evans
PhD (c)

'Over the past year, my involvement with CAWR has continued to be an important part of my professional development. I was grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the CAWR Annual Report, helping to showcase the breadth and impact of research taking place across the community. Co-chairing at the Annual Conference was a particularly rewarding experience that strengthened my confidence, and public speaking skills. The CAWR Women's Health Research Networking Seminar, also provided an excellent opportunity to learn about the innovative research being conducted by colleagues across disciplines and to build meaningful connections with researchers I may not otherwise have met. Being part of such a supportive and collaborative community continues to inspire and enrich my own research journey.'





OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS





CONNECT WITH US



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[Website](#)

<https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/research/research-and-innovation-centres-and-groups/centre-for-health-activity-and-wellbeing-research/>

We welcome collaboration with individuals and organisations, whether you're a practitioner, researcher or just interested in coming along to our in-person networking events.

More formally, we can support you with evaluations of your programmes, offer rapid and systematic review services, or bespoke consultancy and advice services from an interdisciplinary team with the breadth of methodological skills.



Cardiff Met

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Centre for Health, Activity
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Canolfan Ymchwil ar gyfer
Iechyd, Gweithgarwch a Lles

