

# Annual Report 2024/25

## Centre for Health, Activity and Wellbeing Research





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# FOREWORD

*Professor Diane Crone*

## Welcome

I am pleased to welcome you to the 4th CAWR Annual Report. This year has been a consolidation year for us, having grown significantly during our first three years. Our focus has been on ensuring new staff and students who align to CAWR are aware of the Centre and are connected to it. We want to ensure we achieve our aim of being a research and innovation 'home' for our fellow colleagues and early career researchers. This year, we have seen our centre grow in reach across Wales, the UK and internationally, and also in our social media presence. This year we have transitioned from X to BlueSky and LinkedIn. This move, and the new subsequent content, has been managed by our Social Media lead, Dr Tabitha Dickson, and supported by one of our CAWR Early Career Community, PhD student Jodie Horsfall. We have also been helped by a School of Management Digital Marketing student placement, from Ali Zain, who has written a strategy for us in this important area. Nia Evans, a PhD student in the School of Sport and Health Sciences, has also helped us this year with the production of the annual report. Thank you to both Jodie and Nia for your volunteering, and to Ali for his placement choice! It's a huge help to us! This year has also seen more of the first wave of our CAWR PhD students submit and sit their PhD viva's. Our 'where are they now' section celebrates some of these successes.

## Networking

We have had a busy year networking, 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 Italy, Spain, Ireland, the USA, the Netherlands, France and Portugal spreading the CAWR work. We have also hosted visitors too, from Europe and North America. We hope this activity will result in some new projects with these international partners in the future.



## Focus

This year our report focusses on the 2024-2025 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 2024, the networking event, Lunch Bytes, writing retreats, Early Career Community (ECC), and social media.

## 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, and a corresponding social media profile to support this. Our focus this year has been to consider the impact of our CAWR work on the communities in which we work. This has involved our planning and implementation of the research that we do, and how this can be implemented into policy and practice to really 'make a difference'.

## Support

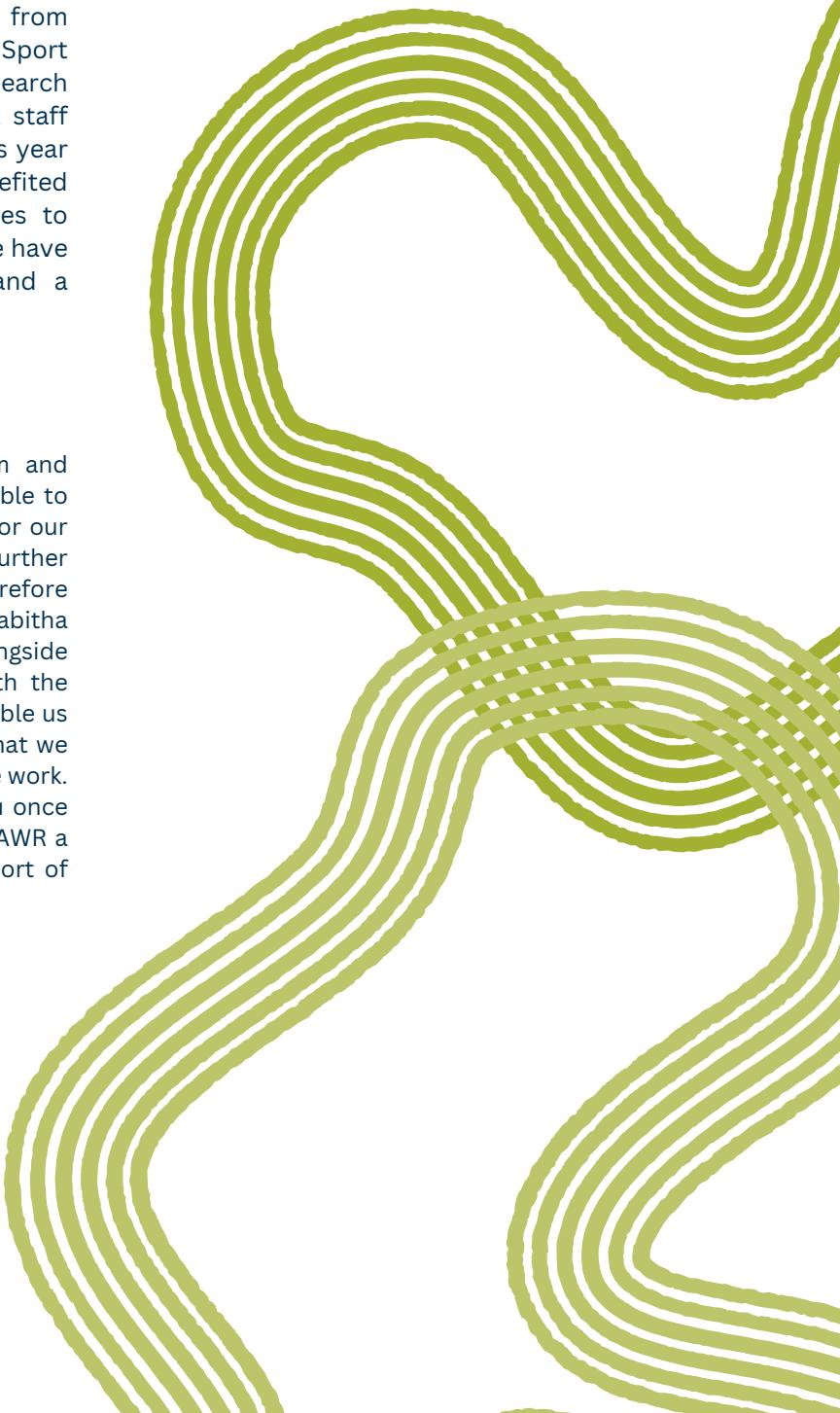
To enable us to be successful we have benefitted from support from senior management in the School of Sport and Health Sciences (CSSHS), our colleagues in Research and Innovation Services, from our CSSHS support staff team and from the University as a whole. Whilst this year has been more financially challenging, we have benefited from a strong commitment from CAWR colleagues to utilize what we have to maximum benefit. As such we have still managed to host writing retreats, 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 extensions to employment for our fixed term staff, through successfully securing further income from external projects. I am really pleased therefore to say we continue to have the amazing team of Dr Tabitha Dickson, Dr Zsófia Szekeres and Dr Sarah Brown alongside Paul Sellars, as our core CAWR team. This team 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 fourth year of CAWR a huge success, we would be nothing without the support of each other.



Prof Diane Crone



# Achievements.

2024/2025

## COLLABORATORS AND INTERNATIONAL VISITS



Sarah Brown	Belgium
Diane Crone	Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Ireland
Kate Isherwood	Belgium
Paul Sellars	Denmark, Northern Ireland
Britt Hallingberg	USA, Portugal, Sweden
Steve Mellalieu	Portugal, France, Austria

Rachel Summer	Ireland
Rachel Lord	Canada
Zsofia Szekeres	France, Estonia, Greece
Anna Bryant	Cyprus
Owen Thomas	Austria
Niki Bolton	Spain

## RESEARCH & INNOVATION GROUPS

● Applied Psychology ● PHELL ● WiDE ● PHWB

● Applied Exercise Science



## SOCIAL MEDIA



1323



42



186

## NETWORKING EVENTS

1

@ 28 attendees



## INCOME GENERATION

£800,000

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

94



## CAWR EVENTS

6 Early Career Community cafés.

1 Lynchbyte @ 40 attendees.

10 Management meetings.

5 Writing retreats.

83 Early Career Community members.

# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF CAWR

## *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:

- 1 Prevention, treatment and management of disease
- 2 Physical activity and exercise promotion
- 3 Health, wellbeing and quality of life across the lifespan
- 4 Lifestyle behaviour and inequalities
- 5 Application of psychology to the improvement of human health, wellbeing and performance, with a focus on vulnerable and under-served groups

## CAWR APPROACH

To address these challenges, CAWR's approach is to:

- 1** Develop innovative solutions and sustainable interventions;
- 2** Adopt inclusive, life-course approaches;
- 3** Assume a socio-ecological perspective;
- 4** Use systems-based approaches for health improvement/health and wellbeing;
- 5** Explore and understand mechanisms underpinning health and human behaviour and function; and
- 6** Adopt multi- and interdisciplinary 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:

- 1** 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.
- 2** To promote research and innovation through interdisciplinary working across our areas of expertise, pan-university with other research centres in Cardiff Met.
- 3** Capitalise on the transdisciplinary nature of CAWR to secure new income in both the areas of research and innovation.
- 4** To sustain and grow the CAWR Early Career Community.
- 5** Develop and promote research and innovation leadership opportunities for researchers of all stages of their career.
- 6** To establish a sustainable and financially secure research centre in the future.
- 7** Increase the profile of CAWR in research and innovation in health, activity, and wellbeing in the local community, Wales and internationally.
- 8** 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, our strategic development and development of centre activities. Our volunteers also attend and contribute to these meetings when they can. We also meet for an annual strategic away day, this year in July we shall meet and review the years activities and successes and plan for 2025-2026. The structure and personnel are presented across the following two pages.

## DIRECTOR



**Prof Diane Crone**

## GROUP LEADS

### Public Health and Wellbeing



**PHWB Co-leads:**  
**Dr Britt Hallingberg**  
**Dr Kate Isherwood**

### Physical Health Education for Lifelong Learning



**PHELL Co-leads:**  
**Dr Anna Bryant**  
**Dr Lowri Edwards**

### Applied Exercise Science



**Applied Ex Sci co-leads:**  
**Dr Rachel Lord**  
**Dr Chris Pugh**

### Wellbeing in Demanding Environments



**WiDE Co-leads:**  
**Prof Steve Mellalieu**  
**Dr Mikel Mellick**

### Applied Psychology



**Applied Psychology Co-leads:**  
**Dr Christine McKnight**  
**Dr Heidi Seage**

# OUR MANAGEMENT TEAM

**Networking & Lunchbyte Activities Lead & Co-leads**  
Drs Britt Hallingberg | Sarah Brown | Zsofia Szekeres



**Early Career Community Lead**  
Dr Tabitha Dickson



**Social Media Co-leads**  
Dr Tabitha Dickson | Jodie Horsfall



**Cardiff School of Management Representative**  
Prof Niki Bolton



**Research Student Volunteers**  
Jodie Horsfall | Nia Evans | Ali Zain (CSM)



**Research Associate Lead**  
Paul Sellars

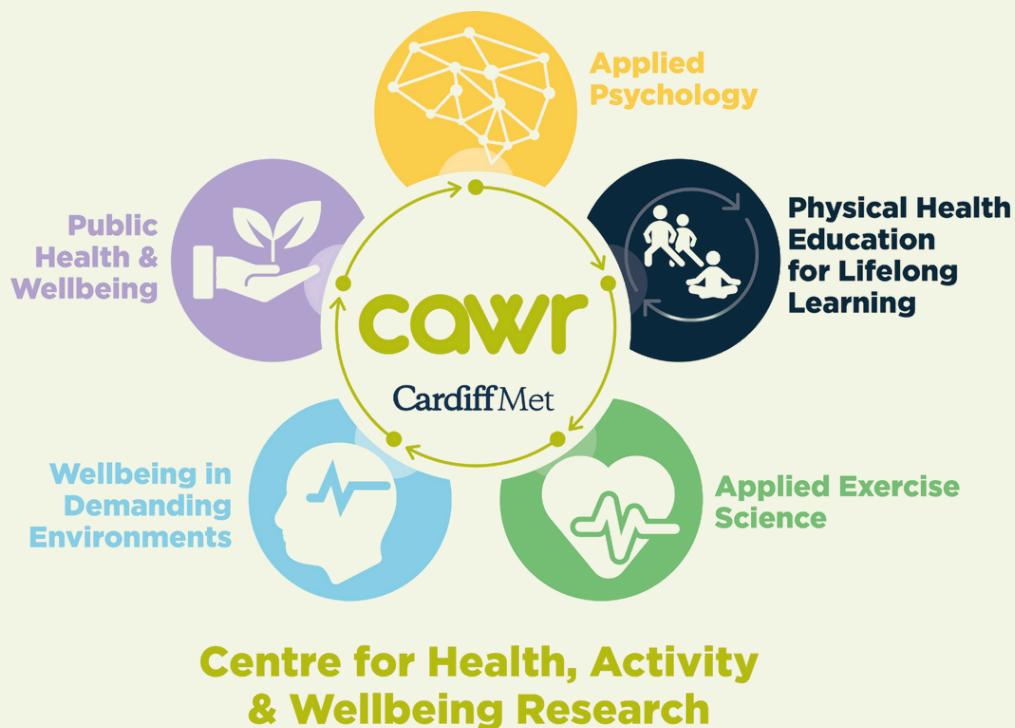


**CSSHS Support Staff**  
Becky Mahoney (Research and Innovation Administrator)  
Rhys Davies (Research and Innovation Officer)  
Liz Jones (Research and Innovation Officer)



# ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout 2024-2025 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 well-being 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:

- Creating an inclusive sport and physical activity system in Wales.
- Having a national conversation about mental wellbeing in Wales.
- It's not a race! A co-designed, interdisciplinary approach to return to running postpartum.
- Tackling poverty among asylum seekers and refugees in Wales: psychological perspectives.
- The development and implementation of a Primary School Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme via multi-stakeholder collaboration in Wales.
- An evaluation of 'POWER UP', a mental health and wellbeing service for young people.

# CREATING AN INCLUSIVE SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY SYSTEM IN WALES

## Background

An inclusive sport and physical activity system can help to address the participation inequalities in Wales. An inclusive system requires system leaders to meaningfully engage with sector leaders, the community, individuals and groups to create the conditions for long-term change that can lead to a healthier and more equal Wales. CAWR was commissioned by Sport Wales to gain a deeper understanding of the current system and to support the development of an inclusive system that addresses participation inequalities.

## Project Objectives

The project aims to foster a sector-led approach to making sport and physical activity in Wales more inclusive and to address participation inequalities.

This was addressed through 4 objectives:

- To capture the network of Wales's sport and physical activity system and identify potential system leaders;
- Seek opinions on (i) the vision statement for Sport Wales in respect to inclusion, and (ii) on how to strengthen and improve the diversity of the sport and physical activity network in Wales;
- Identify case studies of good practice for inclusion in Wales, and;
- Conclude with suggested next steps regarding the development of an inclusive system across Wales.

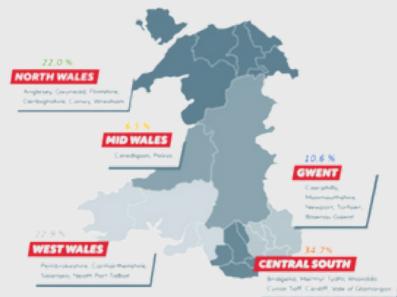
## Method

To address the objectives a survey was administered across Wales to (i) seek views and opinions of the vision of Sport Wales in respect to inclusion, (ii) to gather data to produce a social network analysis of the current sport system, and (iii) to provide some examples of good 'inclusive' practice in Wales.



## PROJECT LEADS

PROFS DIANE CRONE AND NIKI BOLTON.



## Purpose

The findings identified, from a range of stakeholders (n=263) from across Wales, that this is an important agenda for people working, and volunteering in, in the sport and physical activity sector in Wales. It highlighted the need for continued engagement with the sector to further develop a more inclusive sport and physical activity system in Wales. For next steps, the survey identified several leaders in the sport and physical activity system who could be engaged in the further development of an inclusive system, and some interesting examples of inclusive practice (n=9 case studies) to highlight and promote the inclusive system agenda. It also provided evidence on opinions around inclusion, strengthening and improving the diversity of the network and suggestions on how to achieve this, for the future. The project is now in its second stage implementing the findings from this stage.

# HAVING A NATIONAL CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL WELLBEING IN WALES



## PROJECT LEAD

DR KATE ISHERWOOD, LECTURER IN  
PUBLIC HEALTH.

## CONTRIBUTORS

DR BRITT HALLINGBERG, JODIE  
HORSFALL, ANNA RICHARDS, DR  
RACHEL SUMNER AND PROF. DIANE  
CRONE.

## Background

Mental wellbeing is a key component of overall health, influenced by social, economic and environmental factors, with community engagement playing a crucial role in supporting it. Having good mental health and wellbeing is acknowledged in the Future Generations (Wales) Act as being the responsibility of all, requiring a coordinated response across the voluntary and public services. In response to this, a social movement model 'HAPUS' which enables national conversations about mental wellbeing across Wales was launched.

## Project Considerations

This study aimed to better understand the variation across Wales in terms of mental wellbeing outcomes and engagement with wellbeing-promoting activities. The project also aimed to explore at both an individual and community level, which dimensions of the Public Health Wales Conceptual Framework for mental wellbeing are most in need of attention to help reduce inequalities in mental wellbeing outcomes.

## Method

Prior to the launch of the HAPUS programme, a two-part study was conducted to assess levels of social and mental wellbeing and participation in leisure activities in Wales. The first study involved a national cross-sectional survey (N=1,293) while the second study utilised focus groups with participants from charities and underserved groups in South Wales.



## Results

Most participants understood the importance of actions to improve their wellbeing, however, only two-thirds found time for such activities. Significant disparities in wellbeing were noted, with individuals who reported health issues, were younger or lived in the lowest deprivation quintile reporting lower mental and social wellbeing. Qualitative findings highlighted the importance of good sleep, social relationships, and personal time as essential to individual wellbeing. Participants valued access to local green and blue spaces but faced both individual and structural barriers to engaging in wellbeing-promoting activities. Many lacked the confidence to engage in activities in the community and struggled to find suitable opportunities, although they believed community support could enhance their engagement.

## Conclusion & Recommendations

While participants viewed leisure activities as important, multi-level barriers prevented regular engagement and may drive differences in wellbeing between demographic groups. National strategies are needed that encourage engagement in wellbeing promoting activities; most people in Wales know engagement is important, however a significant proportion feel they are not able.



Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales



# IT'S NOT A RACE! A CO-DESIGNED, INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO RETURN TO RUNNING POSTPARTUM



## PROJECT LEAD

MEGAN JAMES (PHD RESEARCHER),  
DR IZZY MOORE (DIRECTOR OF STUDIES)

## SUPERVISORS

PROFESSOR LYNNE EVANS, PROFESSOR DIANE CRONE, DR VICKY STILES, GRÁINNE DONNELLY.

## Background

Despite being an accessible form of physical activity, engagement in running decreases during pregnancy and mothers do not always return to running postpartum. To date, there is a lack of evidence-based guidance regarding return to running postpartum to aid re-engagement. The research in this area is important to facilitate healthy lifestyles for mothers and their children. This ESRC-funded PhD project aimed to co-design an interdisciplinary, biopsychosocial intervention for return to running for mothers following childbirth.

## Project objectives

- Investigate barriers to and facilitators of return to running after childbirth, to provide in-depth insights that could inform the design of a return to running intervention.
- Assess the need and basis for the development of a graded loading pathway that is specific to the pelvis, to aid return to running postpartum.
- Co-design an intervention for return to running following childbirth underpinned by clinical recommendations, existing literature and the findings of Study 1 and 2.

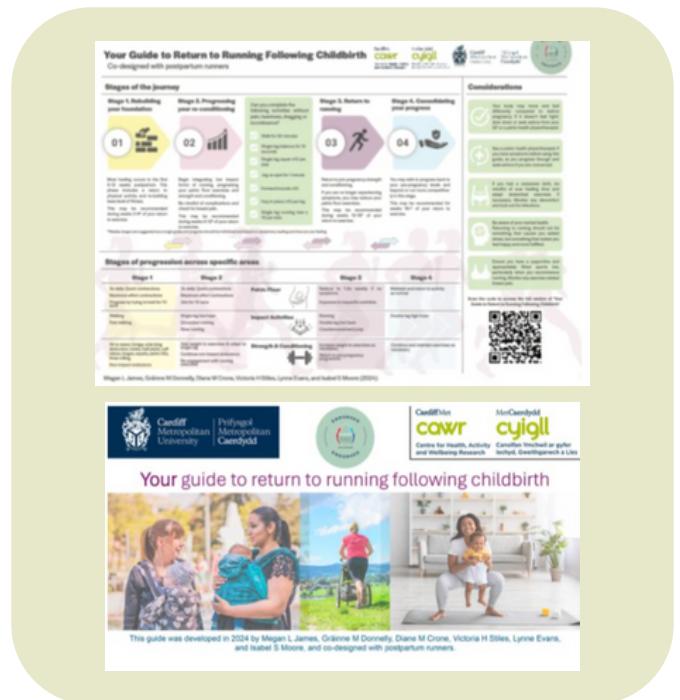
## Method

A mixed-method, co-design, biopsychosocial approach was adopted throughout the PhD project. The first study used an e-survey and follow up focus groups, providing some quantitative results and descriptive data, whilst employing inductive thematic analysis of open-ended responses and focus group transcripts. The second study adopted a biomechanical approach to investigate the loading demands of different exercises at the pelvis. The final study used Advisory Group and sense-check methods to co-design the intervention.



## Purpose

This study resulted in production of the first co-designed guide for return to running postpartum. It is hoped that, once tested for its effectiveness, this guide will aid re-engagement with running in the postpartum period and foster active, healthy lifestyles for mothers and their children.



# TACKLING POVERTY AMONG ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN WALES: PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES



PROJECT LEAD

DR MIKE WELLS & DR HEIDI SEAGE

## Background

Wales is a nation of sanctuary and has shown a strong commitment to receiving asylum seekers and resettling refugees (ASRs). People seeking sanctuary in Wales face uncertainty and hardship, with most living in poverty. This study investigated psychological perspectives on the lived experiences of poverty among ASRs, including the views of service providers for this group. It employed qualitative research methodology, using in-depth semi-structured interviews to understand the poverty experiences of ASRs. The work has relevance for informing efforts to protect the human rights of ASRs and contributes to the realisation of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for an end to poverty everywhere.

## Project objectives

The project, commissioned by the British Academy, aims to investigate the following objectives:

- Capture the voices of this underserved group and explore their conceptions of what it means to be an asylum seeker in the UK
- Explore the views of service providers on the impact that poverty has on ASRs living in Wales

## Method

The CAWR team, led Dr Mike Wells and Dr Heidi Seage applied the following approaches to address the objectives:

- A systematic review of the literature was used to identifying the characteristics of social support and poverty alleviation interventions among asylum seekers and refugees (ASRs) in Western Europe (Wells, M and Seage C H (2023).
- The qualitative phase of the study investigated the lived experiences of poverty among ASRs (Wells, Glennan & Seage, 2024) and explored the views of service providers on the poverty experiences of ASRs in the host communities in Wales.



## Purpose

Several Public engagement activities were developed to disseminate the findings of this project these included a creative arts workshop facilitated by a local refugee artist to developed artwork that expressed their lived experiences of seeking sanctuary in Wales. The artwork was displayed at a public engagement event for this project at Temple of Peace in Cardiff and at community exhibition hosted by Cardiff Central library during the World Refugee Week (17th to 23rd June 2024).



# THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL PHYSICAL LITERACY TRIATHLON PROGRAMME VIA MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION IN WALES (KESS-2 AND SPORT WALES FUNDED PHD)

## Background

Physical Literacy is embedded within the Curriculum for Wales' Health and Well-being Areas of Learning and Experience and underpins high-quality Physical Education. However, many primary teachers feel underprepared due to inconsistent professional learning. Nevertheless, interprofessional collaboration offers a way to support teachers and bridge theory to practice. Community of Practice theory offers a valuable framework for understanding collaboration in sport and Physical Education, yet its application in the physical literacy context remains underexplored.

## Project objectives

The aim was to investigate the development and implementation of a primary school Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme facilitated by a multi-stakeholder collaboration. Research objectives included (i) conducting a scoping review of literature to understand how the Community of practice was defined, characterised and applied in recreational sport and physical activity literature (ii) investigating stakeholder collaboration in developing and implementing the Physical Literacy Training Programme using Community of Practice theoretical framework (iii) exploring the collaboration between primary teachers and external stakeholders in the delivery of the Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme (iv) understand pupils' experiences and perceptions of participating in the programme.

## Method

This study used a qualitative case study design, conducted in two phases. Phase one explored the collaborative development of the Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme using Community of Practice theory to thematically analyse stakeholder engagement through focus groups, interviews, and researcher reflexive diaries. Phase two investigated the implementation of the Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme in a Welsh primary school, drawing on observations, pupil focus groups, teacher and stakeholder interviews, and researcher reflexive diaries to analyse external contributions to PE and pupils' experiences of the programme.



**PROJECT LEAD**  
DR AMY REES

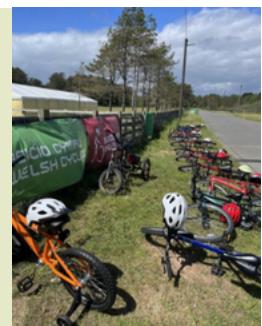
## SUPERVISORS

DR ANNA BRYANT, DR LOWRI EDWARDS, PROFESSOR KEVIN MORGAN AND DR LEA DOHME



## Purpose

The PhD study explored the collaborative development and implementation of a Physical Literacy Triathlon Programme for primary schools in Wales, facilitated through multi stakeholder collaboration of Local Authorities, National Governing Bodies and Higher Education Institutions. This PhD builds on a previous Sport Wales funded Physical Literacy project undertaken by the colleagues from the Physical Health Education for Lifelong Learning (PHELL) group in CAWR.



# AN EVALUATION OF ‘POWER UP’, A MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



**PROJECT LEAD**  
PAUL SELLARS



## Background

The Power Up project aims to put young people in the lead of imagining and creating new ways to support children and young people (aged 10-25) who are experiencing challenges with their mental health. The project is led by Platform, running over five years (since September 2022), and funded by the National Lottery Community Fund through the Mind Our Futures grant. The evaluation is being undertaken by CAWR.

## Project objectives

Throughout the lifespan of the project CAWR are developing and conducting an evaluation which has four objectives:

- Investigate and map the collaboration of Power Up.
- Identify themes on what affects young people’s mental health and wellbeing.
- Evaluate the impact of the Power Up service provision for young people.
- Identify any system/policy changes the Power Up project has influenced.

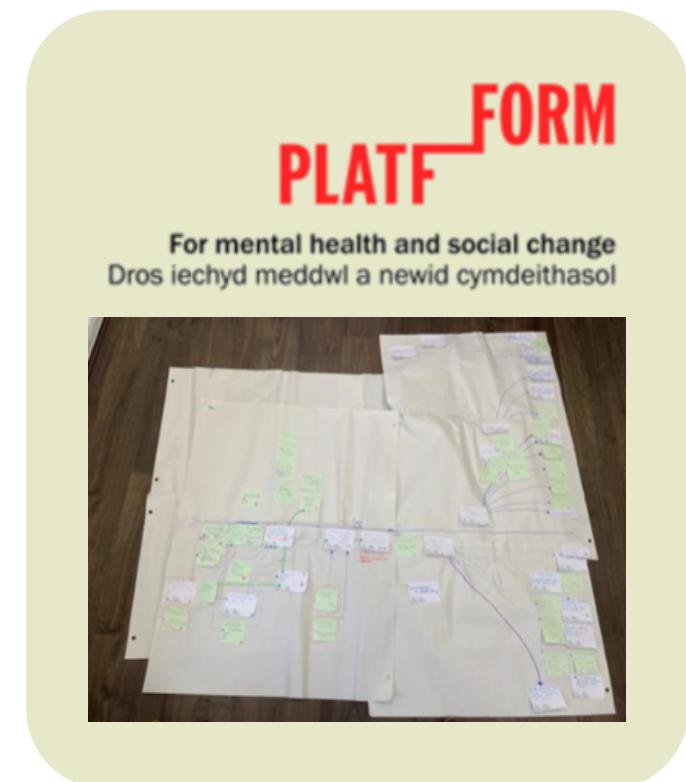
## Method

To achieve the project objectives, a number of approaches are being implemented including surveys, theory of change, and ripple effect mapping.



## Purpose

Through the implementation of the different approaches, both intentional and unintentional impacts of the Power Up will be explored across the lifespan of the project. Overall, the evaluation seeks to capture and demonstrate the wider impacts of POWER UP.



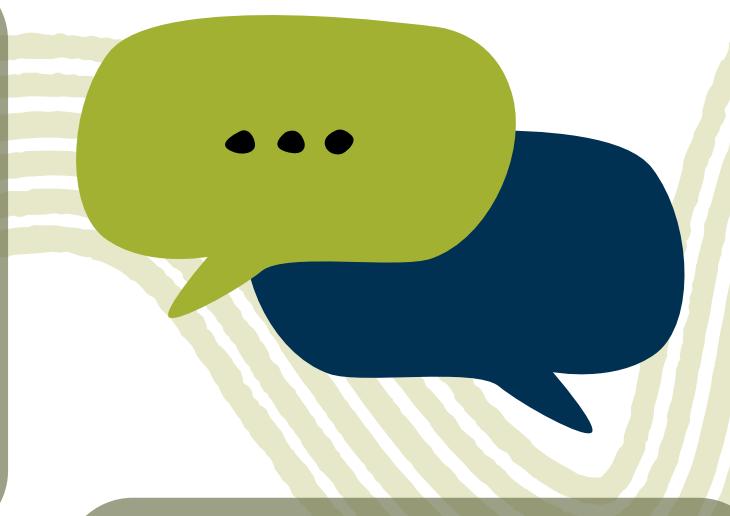
# WHAT OUR PARTNERS SAY ABOUT CAWR AND OUR WORK

We partnered with CAWR to work with us to help make the sport system in Wales more inclusive and to encourage collective ownership of that ambition. The range of expertise that CAWR was able to bring to the table was invaluable in helping us to surface the lived experience of deliverers and to map and understand the current network and links between partners. Their flexible approach allowed us to shape the work along the way which was key to the progress we made.

**Owen Lewis - Director of Sport Systems at Sport Wales.**

Over the last year we have worked closely with CAWR who carried out research into the barriers and facilitators for breastfeeding in Cardiff and the Vale. With access from an experienced and knowledgeable researcher we were kept regularly updated throughout the process we had regular communication which allowed us to refine the research design and promote recruitment via our networks. The research provided useful local evidence presented in reports and a useful summary infographic and contributed to the 2024 Director of Public Health Report on Prioritising the Early Years.

**Kate Roberts, Senior Public Health Practitioner, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, Public Health Team.**



Working with CAWR has been a truly collaborative and enriching experience. Together, we co-produced a systems thinking piece tailored for our region, which not only introduced stakeholders to the concepts but also guided them on a journey of understanding. By the end of the process, stakeholders felt confident and equipped to begin applying systems thinking in practice.

CAWR's approach was grounded in genuine partnership. They remained true to the brief while demonstrating deep empathy for the needs of the sector and the individuals within it. Their ability to make complex ideas accessible, tangible, and relatable was exceptional.

We would wholeheartedly recommend CAWR as a consultancy partner. They bring a wealth of knowledge, understanding and experience, and they excel at co-producing meaningful work which is underpinned by relevant evidence that resonates with diverse audiences.

**Kate Williams – Head of Strategic Partnerships and Development, West Wales Sports Partnership**

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW....



## Anna Richards

*Insights and Engagement Officer, Llais.*

During her time at CAWR and Cardiff Met, Anna was a member of the Early Career Community and volunteered on the ACTIF project, which led to her securing a Research Associate role. She describes CAWR as a crucial stepping stone toward her current position at Llais, highlighting the supportive environment and developmental opportunities that enhanced both her research skills and personal growth. Anna recommends the experience to other early career researchers and expresses gratitude to Di, Zsofia, and the CAWR team for their continued support and guidance.



## Cory Richards

*PhD student and Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Physiology, Cardiff Metropolitan University*

As a Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Physiology at Cardiff Metropolitan University, Cory was previously a PhD student at CAWR and a member of the Early Career Community, researching the effects of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome on the brain and exercise responses. Cory's time at CAWR played a foundational role in shaping his academic journey, enabling him to embed his research into teaching and connect with like-minded peers. He emphasizes the value of CAWR's supportive network and the opportunities it offers—such as ECC Cafés—to build relationships and foster professional development. Cory credits CAWR for guiding him from student to early career researcher and beyond.



## Vasiliki Kolovou

*Research and Evaluation Officer, Public Health Wales*

Vasiliki was a member of the Early Career Community and held a KESS PhD studentship during her time at CAWR and Cardiff Met. Her experience there gave her valuable exposure to cross-cutting policy and public health collaboration, which helped her feel prepared to apply for and secure a role at Public Health Wales. She credits CAWR and CMet with offering opportunities and events that deepened her understanding of systems-level work. Vasiliki encourages other early career researchers to take every chance to connect with professionals from different organisations through conferences, CAWR events, and webinars, noting that these experiences helped her build a strong network that continues to benefit her in her current role.



## Jack Walklett

*Senior Research and Evaluation Officer, Public Health Wales.*

Jack was the founder of the Early Career Community and held a Cardiff Met-funded PhD studentship during his time at CAWR. The research skills he developed throughout his PhD were instrumental in securing his current role at Public Health Wales, where he now applies them daily as part of the Evaluation Team. His leadership experience as CAWR's Early Career Community Lead also equipped him to take on a key role in PHW's Evaluation Community of Practice. Jack encourages early career researchers to fully engage with CAWR and embrace every opportunity, as his time there allowed him to grow both professionally and personally.

# OUR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



Our activities in 2024-2025 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

The third CAWR conference took place on Wednesday 26th June 2024. The hottest day of the year! Attending on the day were 94 delegates – 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 Prof Jim McManus from Public Health Wales and Lauren Idowu from Cardiff and the Vale University Health Board.

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. The conference concluded with a discussion debate chaired by Dr Rhiannon Phillips, our Associate Dean of Research in the School of Sport and Health Sciences, and member of our CAWR Management team. All presentations were co-chaired by members of the CAWR Early Career Community. The Conference was expertly organised by a conference organising committee drawn from members of our CAWR Early Career Community Steering Group.



## RESEARCH NETWORKING EVENTS

This year, we organised an opportunity for CAWR members and external partners to meet each other and understand potential synergies across our areas of expertise. The Research Networking Seminar took place in May 2024 with over 25 attendees. This event was a structured, invited event facilitated by Drs Britt Hallingberg, Sarah Brown and Zsofia 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. The session focused on the following themes:

- Sexual health (behaviours and relationships in different age groups)
- Community partnerships (organisations working together to support local community needs)
- Innovation, technology and design for health
- Facilitating access to green and blue space (applied efforts by organisations to support nature connectedness)
- Social and emotional development in Physical Education / physical health wellbeing

CAWR also supported several other research networking events with PHELL, WiDE and Applied Psychology colleagues.

**PHELL** has hosted two seminar events with external guest speakers. A virtual session on Research and Industry Collaborations was led by Professor Dawn Penney from Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia. A second online event, a Physical Literacy Symposium with Karen Rhys-Jones (Wrexham University) and Fiona Heath-Diffey took place in May, exploring physical literacy within Initial Teacher Education and Training.

Regarding **WiDE**, CAWR hosted an information session with the All-Wales Policing Academic Collaboration (AWPAC) with 22 attendees, facilitated by Professor Owen Thomas, Professor Deborah Jones (Swansea University) and Temporary Detective Chief Superintendent Ross Evans. This event provided an introduction to AWPAC, highlights of activity and impact to date and an overview of the ongoing AWPAC strategy.



Facilitated by Helen Hodgetts two events were hosted for **Applied Psychology**. The first invited Dr Alexandre Marois, Assistant Professor, Université Laval, Québec, Canada to deliver a health sciences talk entitled 'Better Supporting Humans with Neuroergonomics and Affective Computing' and had 10 attendees. The presentation explored how neuroergonomic principles, as well as the neuroergonomics research framework proposed by Parasuraman and colleagues, can guide the early development and real-world implementation of tools designed to enhance human performance, health, and well-being. The second invited Sébastien Tremblay from Laval University, Quebec to deliver a talk on 'human factors in challenging work environments' and had 10 attendees.

## KNOWLEDGE LUNCHBYTE SEMINAR

Our virtual lunchtime sessions showcase our applied research projects, specifically the background of the collaborative partnership and how the evidence from the research is being used to make a difference in each setting.

In February, Dr Heidi Seage and Katrina Burchell, CEO of the Pernicious Anaemia Society hosted a LunchByte event where they provided insight into pernicious anaemia and why research is important to the society and its members. They discussed some of their collaborative work and the resulting publications, highlighting where the research can or has helped patients.

## EARLY CAREER COMMUNITY

Our ever-growing Early Career Community (ECC) plays a pivotal role in CAWR's activities, as active researchers, CAWR event organisers and members of the CAWR management team. Our ECC is a supportive and welcoming environment for people who share CAWR's research interests and are new to academic life. We have held drop-in coffee meet-ups every other month this year, organised immediately after the monthly CAWR management meeting to enable management team to also come and meet our Early Career Community.

The ECC is overseen by the ECC Steering Group that includes PhD students and post-doctoral academic staff. ECC membership is open to all and includes colleagues from some of our partners such as the local Health Boards, and also early career researchers from other universities.



## 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.

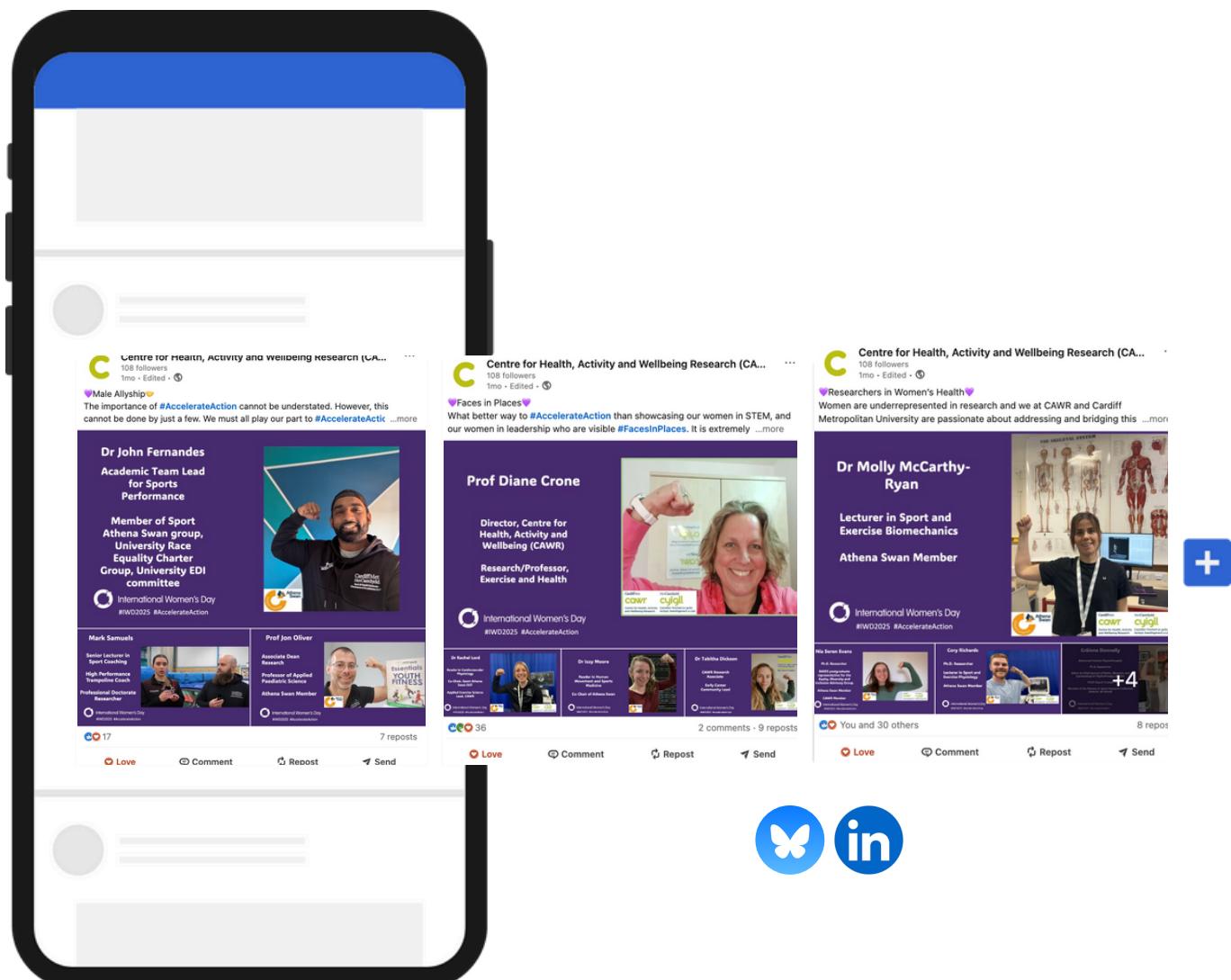
This year, we were able to offer a total of five writing retreats which, due to financial constraints, were largely held on our own campuses. Despite being located 'at work' the days were well attended by around 15 people at each one, from all areas of CAWR's research interests. We benefit from a good mix of researchers, from early career researchers (staff and doctorate students) to more established mid/late career staff, including Readers and Professors.

The photographs from the writing retreats this year demonstrate that we have representation that spans across the whole of the Schools where members are located. The days always include some informal networking opportunities across areas of research expertise which is warmly welcomed by attendees.



Our social media is managed by Dr Tabitha Dickson, supported by Jodie Horsfall. We have seen significant change this year as we have decided to move away from X (formerly Twitter) and migrate to LinkedIn and BlueSky. As a consequence, we have spent time populating new CAWR accounts, connecting up with followers, and developing new content.

Our new social media 'home' can be found on LinkedIn and BlueSky. We did two planned series of posts for International Women's Day organised by Cory Richards, and for World Leisure Day organised by Jodie Horsfall. Tabitha has also been busy adding our Welsh language content throughout the year. We have also been lucky to have secured the help of Ali Zain, a School of Management Digital Marketing post graduate student. Ali undertook his placement with us, and during this developed a social media marketing strategy for us, which we plan to embrace and learn to implement in 2025-2026. Watch this space!



# WHAT OUR CAWR MEMBERS SAY

**Jodie Horsfall**

**PhD Student at Cardiff Metropolitan University and CAWR Social Media Co-Lead**

Being a CAWR team member has been integral to my entrance into academic life. Coming from a non-academic, musical background, the transition into academia seemed daunting, however, the CAWR community made this transition seamless for me. I first worked with CAWR on a 3-month placement for my masters in 2023. During that time, I embedded myself with the management team and met so many incredible researchers who were excited to hear about my research interests. Then after placement, by working with a team of CAWR researchers, I won funding from the WGSSS to complete a PhD in Sport Science and am now a doctoral research student here at Cardiff Met. CAWR continue to support me in my research journey via their Early Career Community where I can attend events to network with other new-starting researchers. I also volunteer as CAWR's social media lead where I get to boost my IT and media skills and keep up to date with CAWR's research projects and events.

During my time at CAWR and Cardiff Met, I had the opportunity to build valuable networks, strengthen my research skills, and broaden my awareness of diverse research areas. Being part of the Early Career Community allowed me to connect with academics and researchers from a range of disciplines, which helped shape my thinking and future research direction. A particular highlight was contributing to the development of the annual conference report alongside experienced academics, which enhanced my understanding of collaborative research processes and academic communication. These experiences played a key role in my professional development and continue to inform my work today.

**Nia Evans PhD Student at Cardiff Metropolitan University and CAWR Report Designer**

**Dr Molly McCarthy-Ryan Lecturer in Sport and Exercise Biomechanics**

The CAWR writing retreat was a great chance to step back from day-to-day work and really focus on some research. I made significant progress on drafting a paper I'd been meaning to get to, and it was also just nice to connect with others in the CAWR community!

**Ali Zain MSc Digital Marketing Student at Cardiff Metropolitan University and CAWR Digital Marketing Placement**

Working with CAWR was an amazing experience. Although we only met a few times in person, I could truly feel the team's sincerity and how hard they are trying for the organisation. What stood out to me most was their supportive environment and leadership style, based on trust, passion, and collaboration. The energy, the jokes, the ideas, and their genuine interest in learning something completely out of their field, like digital marketing, made me feel special. They appreciate the talents of others and are always willing to help each other grow. I am grateful for this opportunity, and I believe the world needs to know about CAWR.

# OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS



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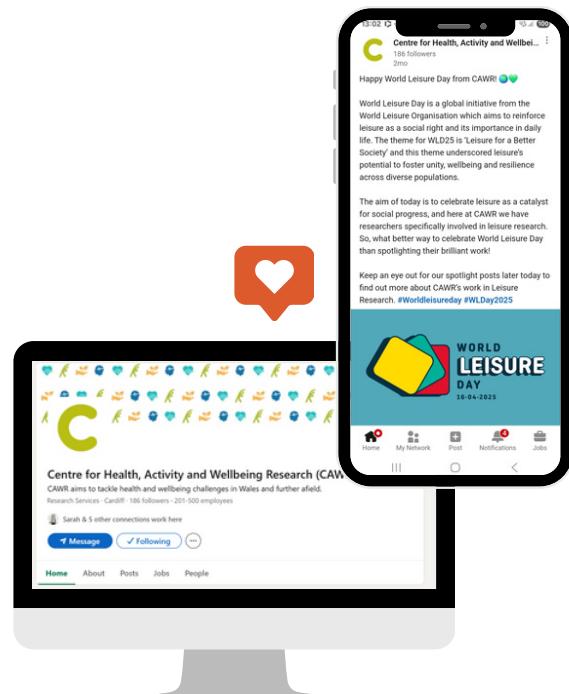


Gorputz eta Kirol  
Hezkuntza  
Saila  
Departamento de Educación Física y Deportiva

# CONNECT WITH US

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.



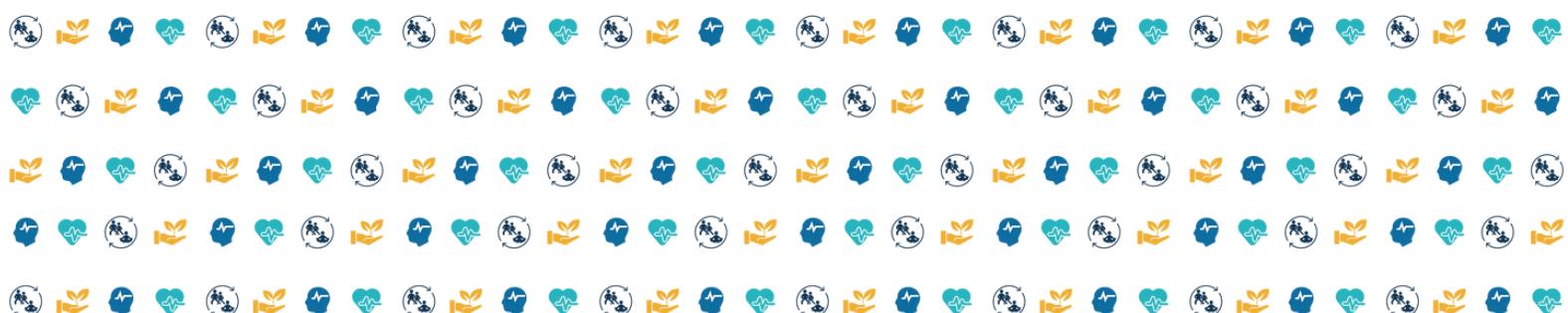
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