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Can WIPAHS Help You?



At the Welsh Institute of Physical Activity, Health and Sport (WIPAHS), our primary goal is to respond to health and well-being questions raised by those at the heart of delivering associated initiatives and working in the field. We are dedicated to disseminating knowledge effectively across diverse audiences, with a particular emphasis on enhancing visibility and accessibility. We seek to actively engage key stakeholders and the public in identifying crucial research questions.

Through collaboration and co-production, we aim to make a tangible impact on the people of Wales by addressing health inequalities. We prioritise sharing knowledge, promoting the accessibility of research and physical activity, and offering actionable insights that can be readily applied to both policy and practice.

Our mission is to build research capacity across Wales, through training future scientists and increasing strategic collaborations between Sport Wales, academics, businesses, and stakeholders. We strive to optimise approaches that harness the transformative power of physical activity and sport to enhance the lives of individuals in Wales, irrespective of their background or geographical location.





















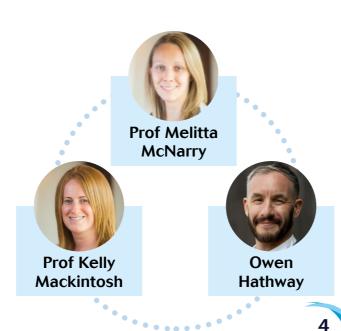
A Foreword from the Directors and Chairs of WIPAHS

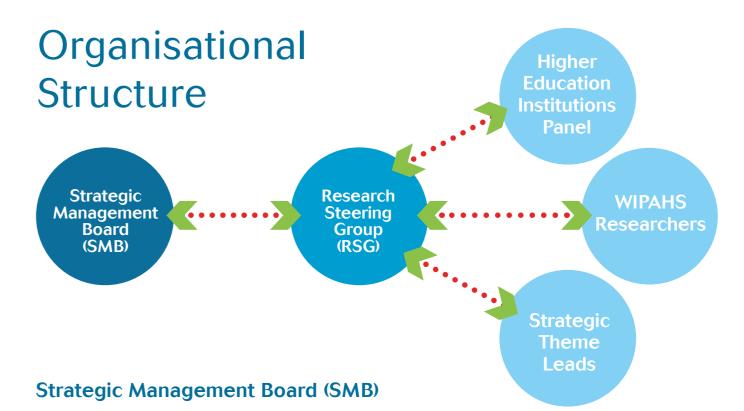
The last year has continued to be a turbulent time for many, including those involved in public health research and promotion, with the challenges of the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) pandemic far from over and its ongoing ramifications only gradually being realised. Throughout this year, the Welsh Institute of Physical Activity, Health and Sport (WIPAHS) have been privileged to continue to support practitioners, policy makers and stakeholders in responding and adapting to the changing landscape. Indeed, following on from our highly productive year in 2022, WIPAHS have been involved in 20 projects. These projects have ranged from providing evaluations and recommendations for national mental health promotion initiatives to conducting workshops targeted at improving the conversations of clinical care teams with patients and their carers regarding physical activity and sedentary behaviour. Additional projects have included developing effective evaluations of schemes seeking to reduce and prevent youth crime through physical activity and sport.

During 2023, WIPAHS has continued to expand and is now very fortunate to have two dedicated researchers and a project manager to help us meet the growing demand. Furthermore, in accord with WIPAHS' objective of translating research into policy and practice, and in recognition of the highly complex area that this encompasses, we have expanded our theme leads to specifically include a 'Policy and Public Affairs' theme, to which we appointed two highly experienced researchers to lead. There has also been growing global interest in the establishment and ongoing development of WIPAHS, in part facilitated by our involvement in the World Health Organization's (WHO) Health Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Europe Early Career Researcher Development Programme. As a result of such interest, we have developed a set of Principles of Working, which will enable other countries to establish their own complementary institutes.

Whilst this annual report seeks to represent the many successes that have characterised the last year by providing a spotlight on a selection of the projects completed, it also recognises the opportunities that lie ahead. In the upcoming year, we intend to focus on diversifying our dissemination and outreach activities, including through the development of a new, interactive website, and the provision of workshops that will provide practitioners and policy makers with the tools to maximise the insights they can gain from data they already have.

Finally, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to the success of WIPAHS over the past year - our dedicated Higher Education Institute Representatives and Theme Leads, passionate researchers, committed partners, and the communities we serve. As we continue to face unprecedented global circumstances and challenges that influence all of us in our professional and personal lives, it is with significant pride and gratitude to those involved with WIPAHS that we reflect on our steadfast commitment in achieving our aim of promoting and enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities through the transformative power of physical activity. Together, we are creating a legacy of well-being and vitality that will resonate for generations to come.





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Co-Director of WIPAHS Chair of Research Steering Group

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Sport Wales Representative



User Research Lead Sport Wales



WIPAHS Annual Report 2023

Research Themes

At WIPAHS, we seek answers for real-life questions brought to us by stakeholders who need support in the physical activity, health and/or sport domains. To enable us to achieve this, we have appointed academic experts across six key areas:

- Population Level Change
- Behaviour Change
- · Moving for Health
- · Mental Health & Well-Being
- Health, Sport and Physical Activity Economics
- Policy & Public Affairs



Behaviour
Change
Prof Joanne Hudson
Professor of Exercise and
Sport Psychology
Swansea University

Focused on helping to understand the factors that influence people's behaviour(s) and the approaches that can be adopted to promote changes in those behaviours across the lifespan.



Mental Health and Well-Being

Paul Sellars
Research Associate
Cardiff Metropolitan
University

Focused on understanding and seeking ways to enhance mental health and well-being. This theme considers how people feel and their behaviour and their ability to achieve their goals.



Population Level Change

Dr Kelly Morgan Senior Research Fellow Cardiff University

Focused on exploring how factors such as a physical activity, sport and/or health have changed over time and in relation to specific drivers at a regional or national level.



Policy and Public Affairs

Prof Niki Bolton
Head of Department,
Marketing and Strategy
Cardiff Metropolitan
University

Lauren Idowu
Principle Health Promotion
Specialist
Cardiff and Vale University
Health Board

Focused on the factors influencing the translation of research into practice and policy at a local and national level.



Health, Sport, and Physical Activity Economics

Katherine Cullen Health Economist Swansea University

Focused on understanding the economic impacts of improving access to and engagement with health, sport and physical activity in Wales.



Moving for Health

Dr Richard Metcalfe Senior Lecturer in Health and Exercise Physiology Swansea University

Focused on understanding the various effects of different types and amounts of physical activity on aspects of physical and mental health across the lifespan.

2023 Highlights

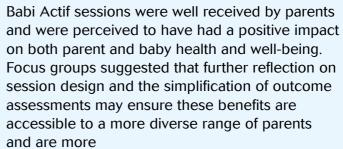
Babi Actif: Supporting Parents to be Active with their Babies in the First 1,000 Days of their Lives

The first 1,000 days (from conception to a child's 2nd birthday) offer a unique window of opportunity to build healthier, happier children and to improve their life chances. Time spent outdoors, even when sleeping, is a vital part of a baby's development as it is suggested to stimulate them, benefit the way they learn, and help prevent vitamin D deficiencies.



Simultaneously, time outdoors has been suggested to be an accessible intervention that may help address the rising mental health crisis in pregnant and post-partum women, with anxiety and depression affecting one in seven women during the perinatal period and associated with increased risk of pre-term delivery, reduced mother-infant bonding, and delays in infant cognitive/emotional development that may persist into childhood. Despite the potential benefits of time outdoors to both mother and baby, time spent outdoors during the foundational years has declined over recent decades.

Babi Actif's aim was to support parents to be active outdoors with their babies during their first 1,000 days. Surveys, co-designed by Bangor University researchers and Babi Actif staff and completed by Babi Actif participants, were complemented by focus groups with participants and service providers to provide in-depth experiences of the programme.



easily recordable over the short- and long-term.

Overall, Babi Actif provided physical activity and well-being support to parents and their babies that was not available elsewhere, particularly during the pandemic.



3

Battling the Unknown: Portraying Lived Experiences of COVID-19 and Long-COVID

The COVID-19 pandemic presented the world with a phenomenon that was difficult to both understand and live with. Listening to, and being able to learn from, the day-to-day lived experiences of individuals who have had, or were still recovering from, COVID-19 was highlighted as a priority by the National Institute for Health and Care Research.

We used a novel story-telling approach (composite vignettes) to explore the secondary, and too often overlooked, socio-psychological effects and their implications. The most common themes and experiences were used to create four descriptive experience portrayals.



Each story, whilst representing the experiences of multiple participants, sought to give a single voice to a different experience trajectory, capturing from the acute onset of symptoms through the ongoing recovery process (6–11 months post-infection), how COVID-19 and subsequent long-COVID shaped the individuals' everyday lives.

To hear these experiences brought to life, click the themes below:

'Almost recovered—out of sight, out of mind, but I just had to get on with it'

'Ongoing waves—trapped on the COVID roller-coaster, when the horizon just keeps falling out of sight'

'Relapse—recover, relief, relapse, battling the unknown enemy'

'Persistent-life-changing and lifelong... is this it now?'

Presenting the lived experience of COVID-19 and consequent long-COVID in participants' own words revealed the highly variable, but generally devastating, impacts COVID-19 has had across many facets of daily living.

Taken together, these trajectories highlight the urgent need for more tailored and diverse support for those who have experienced these devasting impacts.



Motivate2Move Factsheets: Accessible Evidence-Based Information

The role of physical activity in the prevention, management, and treatment of many physical and mental health conditions is well recognised. However, the information is not always easily accessible for practitioners and, where summaries have been created, they require updating to ensure they are in line with the most up-to-date evidence. WIPAHS collaborated with Dr Brian Johnson, a General Practitioner passionate about promoting physical activity, and the creator and driver of the original factsheets. Colleagues across three universities collaborated to update or produce 14 Factsheets.

- 1 All-Cause Mortality
- 2 Cancer
- 3 Chronic Kidney Disease
- 4 Mental Health
- 5 Metabolic Health Conditions
- 6 Pre-Diabetes and Type 2 Diabetes
- 7 Type 1 Diabetes

- 8 Musculoskeletal Health & Parkinsons Disease
- 9 Obesity
- 10 Pregnancy and Postpartum
- 11 Respiratory Disease
- 12 Sedentary Behaviour
- **13** Before Surgery (Prehabilitation)
- 14 Starting to Get Active



BRIT Challenge:
Using Collaborative
Well-being Activities
to Destigmatise
Mental Health

The British Inspirational Trust (BRIT) approached WIPAHS to conduct an evaluation of the BRIT Challenge 2023. BRIT, a charity organisation supported by high-profile sporting ambassadors, aims to raise awareness and funding to enhance and destigmatise mental health in young adult students and staff through the completion of an annual, collaborative challenge.

In 2023, this involved well-being activities including moving (in any form, in teams or as individuals) 2,023 miles between January 23rd and March 23rd. Over 450 Higher and Further Education Institutes have engaged with the BRIT Challenge across the UK, and it is supported by Universities UK, a collective of 140 UK university Vice Chancellors. To better understand how the BRIT Challenge can support the mental health and well-being of university students and staff, WIPAHS aimed to conduct an

evaluation based on gathering the views and experiences of the BRIT Challenge participants. However, unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control, this was not possible. Therefore the implementation of the BRIT Challenge was evaluated by conducting semi-structured interviews with those who co-ordinated the 2023 BRIT Challenge at various Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) across Wales.

The key findings included shared experiences regarding target audiences, competing initiatives, and approaches taken to conduct the BRIT Challenge.
Encouragement and support from the BRIT Challenge Organiser and being previously involved in the running of the BRIT Challenge were highlighted as key facilitators, but general capacity on top of day-to-day work and support from the HEI itself were identified as barriers.

Interview participants shared their positive outlook on the BRIT Challenge being a prevention tool for poor mental health and well-being.

Read the BRIT Challenge Report:



Facilitating Lifestyle Changes in a Sustainable and Cost-Effective Way

WIPAHS were asked by Cardiff and Vale University Health Board to help evaluate the impact of a community, co-produced, Health and Well-being Fayre. Developed in line with Welsh Government policies, the event aimed to promote physical, mental, and overall health and well-being within the local community by demonstrating the variety of physical activity options available and empowering self-management.

Key recommendations for the design of similar events in the future include:

- Widening the advertising approach to include more non-digital methods;
- Consider implementing a health economics evaluation;
- Streamlining the timing of events to maximise attendance;
- Increase awareness of the practical element(s) of the events to increase attendance and engagement.





Reasons for attendance:

Individual:

- To meet like-minded people
- To find out what is going on
- To find out about services
- To increase knowledge

Professional

- Networking
- Feed ideas into own group • Improve ability to signpost

"Often not aware of what's going on"

"Got to talk to people [pharmacy: The Voice] that normally wouldn't have the chance to"

"Good to have everything in one place"





An Evaluation of the 60+ Active Leisure Scheme

The 60+ Active Leisure Scheme (ALS) was initiated by Sport Wales in 2021 as part of the Healthy Weight Healthy Wales delivery plan. The scheme aims to reduce health inequalities and social isolation among the over-60 years population by providing people with an opportunity to engage in physical activity initiatives. Our ongoing evaluation indicates a successful implementation of the scheme, with most Local Authorities having coproduced the offer, listening to, and acting on, the input from the local community. A key priority of the 60+ ALS is to target health and access inequalities, with numerous Local Authorities specifically focusing on increasing engagement in typically underserved communities and ethnic minorities. The significant social benefits for the individuals taking part remain amongst the most positive impacts. A primary focus over the final phase of this evaluation will be the sustainability of the programme beyond the initial funded period.

#ifyougoigo - Torfaen County **Borough Council**

The #ifyougoigo campaign aims to facilitate more women, to be more active, more often. The free to access 10-week programme includes weekly group sessions, personal 1:1 training, mentoring, nutritional advice, and the opportunity to try out new sports and activities. Whilst it has been running for 8 years with over 230 women taking part, a key area that the team highlighted for input was around their evaluation of the impact of the intervention. Initial phases of work have concentrated on streamlining their current approaches to evaluation to ensure they are rigorous and robust. Funding has just been secured to support an MSc by Research student, to allow a formal evaluation of the programme to be undertaken.

Cystic Fibrosis and Body Esteem

Body esteem is an important social and individual variable for health as it can both enhance and impair behaviours. This can be especially true in clinical populations where the relationship between body esteem may be complicated by its interaction with the development and treatment of their condition. This topic was highlighted in the 2022 WIPAHS Roadshow and developed into a productive collaboration which seeks to conduct a systematic review exploring the role of body esteem in the health behaviours of those living with cystic fibrosis and how this has been altered by Kaftrio (which has dramatically changed the body morphology of many with cystic fibrosis). The review is ongoing and has now entered the data extraction and analysis phase.

Population-Level Surveillance of Youth Physical Activity

Building on the work commenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to assess the physical activity levels and behaviours of children and adolescents across Wales and their relationship with mental health and well-being. This rich longitudinal dataset (collected via a series of online surveys and a stratified sub-sample of 800 seven-day accelerometery measures) will allow us to identify the impact of factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic, curriculum re-development and funding decisions across individual Welsh regions. This data will also be utilised to identify specific areas that require targeted intervention strategies.



WIPAHS Case Studies

Sit Less. Be Active. Play More.

Following the WIPAHS Roadshow in 2022, a Paediatric Consultant from Cardiff and Vale Health Board sent an expression of interest to the WIPAHS team looking to collaborate in the area of paediatric patients' physical activity levels.

We have since delivered a workshop at Swansea University Bay Campus to 24 healthcare professionals from across Wales. The workshop aimed to spark conversations how we encourage physical activity in clinical paediatric populations, but also allow an opportunity for networking and shared learning regarding the methods currently used across health boards in Wales.

To ensure that the insights gained from this work are generalisable across Wales and thereby to maximise their impact, we have subsequently developed and implemented a nationwide survey to gain further perspectives on the promotion of physical activity and sedentary behaviour in clinical paediatric populations.



Health Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Early Career Development Programme

Based on preliminary work exploring the implementation and ongoing development of WIPAHS, Dr Amie Richards submitted a successful application to join the HEPA/ World Health Organisation (WHO) Europe Early Career Researcher Development Programme.

As part of this programme, a set of Principles of Working have been generated which it is anticipated will be used by others, particularly across Europe, to set-up their own institutes.



Being involved with such a prestigious programme has been invaluable for Dr Amie Richards, but has also been a fantastic way to spread the word about WIPAHS and build collaborations around Europe. This has further been facilitated through numerous dissemination opportunities, including at the WHO Europe Headquarters in Copenhagen, Denmark and at the 12th congress of HEPA Europe in Leuven, Belgium.





Bridgend County Borough Council: Prioritising Active Young People

Following an initial discussion with the Well-being Manager at the Active Young People Department (AYPD) for Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) it was established that three evaluations would be conducted by WIPAHS to explore the effectiveness of key physical activity and well-being programmes that they currently run in local schools and the community.

School Health Research Network (SHRN) Young People Consultation

Twenty-two primary schools across
Bridgend participated in the SHRN survey in 2023. WIPAHS are conducting followup focus groups with children aged 9-11 years to explore some of the questions that were asked in the SHRN survey. This will enable the AYPD to further tailor their programmes to meet the needs of the children within the Borough.

We are very excited to be working with WIPAHS and being able to tap into and utilise the extensive knowledge and experience they have to support us to shape existing programmes in order to meet the needs of our young people.

Karen Winch, Bridgend AYPD

Family Active Zone (FAZ) Evaluation

FAZ programmes take place across primary schools in Bridgend, with much anecdotal positive feedback. The aims of FAZ are to improve fundamental movement skills, social skills, and healthy eating.

Due to the wide range of outcomes WIPAHS are conducting an initial evaluation to explore why schools and families engage with FAZ to help inform its future iterations and refinement.



Young Leadership Programme Evaluation

The Young Leadership programme has been active in Bridgend for 16 years and has received considerable attention as a leading programme in South Wales. Students join the programme at 13 years of age and there are opportunities to continue into adulthood. An in-depth evaluation is currently taking place to explore perceptions of the programme from school staff, AyPD staff, employers in the community, and students who have both completed and are currently engaged with the programme. An online survey has also been completed prior to the start of the programme, with follow-up surveys planned for three-, six- and nine-month time-points to explore its influence on confidence and attitudes.

A full evaluation report will be produced in 2024, with the potential opportunity for this to become an annual programme evaluation. Two WIPAHS researchers also attended the Bridgend Big Show in July 2023 to learn about the projects and pathways available for young people across the borough and to celebrate those who have excelled in the Young Leadership Programme.

WIPAHS Stakeholder Engagement and Knowledge-Sharing Activities

During 2023, members of the WIPAHS team participated in a range of activities focused on stakeholder engagement, community outreach, and knowledge exchange.

These included:

- Representation at national and international conferences;
- Representation at national consultation workshops and Government-led public policy seminars;
- A submission to the Global Observatory of Physical Activity on behalf of Public Health Wales;
- Conducting guest lectures;
- · Invited radio interviews; and,
- · Presenting at public events.

Are we Thinking about Measuring and Presenting Impact Data in the Right Way? An Evaluation Workshop

Following on from successful collaborations with the Office of Police and Crime Commission (OPCC), WIPAHS were approached to provide expertise to strategic leads within the OPCC through an impact and evaluation workshop.

The aims of the workshop were to introduce different types of evaluation and increase knowledge around its role in assessing intervention outputs and outcomes. The workshop was delivered at the South Wales Police Headquarters to ten strategic leads and project officers working for the OPCC.



WIPAHS facilitated a workshop for our leadership team. The session was well structured, and the content was tailored to the objectives that we previously agreed on. The session was engaging and despite being a small group had a lot of energy.

The team really enjoyed the session and look forward to continuing the work.



Australia - Networking, Internationalisation, and Knowledge Exchange

In the latter part of 2023, Dr Amie Richards and Dr Rachel Knight, two of our WIPAHS researchers, travelled to Perth and Melbourne. The primary purpose was to facilitate networking, and showcase and promote WIPAHS.

More specifically, they identified essential complementary expertise to enhance WIPAHS, foster more significant impact through the translation and implementation of knowledge, and extend the international reach of our work, reputation, and associated impacts.



A series of seminars presenting the founding principles and ways of working that underpin WIPAHS were delivered. These seminars generated numerous interesting discussions and opportunities for potential collaborations.

As well as consolidating existing collaborations with the University of Western Australia and Deakin University, new partnerships were explored with researchers from many other universities, including Edith Cowan, Notre Dame and Murdoch University in Perth; and Victoria University, The Victoria Cancer Council, Monash University and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Melbourne. These networking events have enabled us to identify external advisors to join our stakeholder group, providing vital expertise and international perspectives to ensure WIPAHS continues to thrive over the coming years.



In the Pipeline for 2024

WIPAHS Community Outreach Events

Following the success of the WIPAHS Roadshow during the Summer of 2022, plans are underway to deliver a series of community-focused events. Building on our prior learning and knowledge that successful partnerships can be developed, and collaborations pursued, through locally delivered engagement and dissemination activities, the 2024 outreach programme will aim to deliver a series of bespoke events and attend existing community events within local communities, across Wales.

These events will prioritise community, public and stakeholder engagement and knowledge exchange, embracing the ethos of WIPAHS:

Community-driven translational research, for Wales, by Wales.

Work in Progress: Active Healthy Ageing Wales Network

The Active Healthy Ageing Wales Network has been established as a key pillar of research and evaluation conducted as part of WIPAHS. The concept of the Network has been discussed with County Council representatives who are delivering the Sport Wales 60+ Active Leisure Scheme, and WIPAHS is evaluating, and with the Age Friendly Officers Community.

A key target for 2024 is to work with the Office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales to explore the feasibility of connecting in with the Exercise Practice Community they are developing.



The Women's Health Network has recently been established as a priority to address key research questions and initiatives around women's health and physical activity, encompassing sport, and spanning from menarche to menopause.

Whilst the network remains in its infancy, we have representatives across Wales, from researchers, General

Practitioners, Genera Practitioners, and stakeholders.

Our initial efforts are centred on establishing working groups, identifying priorities, and appointing leaders to propel advancements in this area.

Thank You!

Collaborators

We would like to thank all organisations who have provided financial contributions (direct or inkind) or contributed to the running of WIPAHS's infrastructure and to individual projects.

















































Project Contributors

We would also like to thank all of the individuals who contributed to the projects highlighted in this report.

Dr Neil Agnew	Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board	
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Professor Richard Bracken	Swansea University	
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Dr Sarah Denford	University of Bristol	
Dr Marilize De Vivo	Canterbury Christ Church University and Active Pregnancy Foundation	
Mr Michael Dooley	NHS Consultant and Private Clinic	
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Dr Nicola Grey	Swansea University	
Faith Goodliffe	Swansea University	
Dr Gareth Hall	Aberystwyth University	
Dr Britt Hallinberg	Cardiff Metropolitan University	
Dr Liesel Hurter	Liverpool John Moores University	
Dr Brian Johnson	Health Education and Improvement Wales	
Sarah Jones	Cardiff and Vale University Health Board	
Dr Pascale Kippelen	Brunel University	
Dr Hans-Peter Kubis	Bangor University	
Dr Leanne Lester	University of Western Australia	
Dr Daniel March	University of Leicester	
Dr Olivia McCarthy	Swansea University	
Dr Hayley Mills	Canterbury Christ Church University	
Coleen Nolan	WIPAHS	
Dr Aled Rees	Cardiff University	
Dr Lee Romer	Brunel University	
Dr Aamer Sandoo	Bangor University	
Dr Zoe Saynor	Portsmouth University	
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Dr Thomas Wilkinson	University of Leicester	WIPAHS over the past three years.

Can WIPAHS Help You?

WIPAHS is here to help turn research into real-world practice. Whether your organisation needs support for workshops, exploring specific interests, evaluating services, or understanding current situations, WIPAHS can help you achieve this.

We're a flexible research and evaluation network that can adapt to the unique needs and timelines of your project. The diagram below highlights one-way WIPAHS might approach a project; the loop shows that WIPAHS not only contributes to individual projects but also learns from them, using knowledge gained to benefit other projects as well.



Stakeholders identify a topic of interest

Insight is applied in practise

Insight is refined and shared

A collaborative team conduct research to generate insight

WIPAHS review existing research

Stakeholders & WIPAHS co-design a research project





If you are interested in finding out how WIPAHS can help your organisation to answer important research and evaluation questions, provide your organisation with important insight, or identify collaborators, please do get in touch.

If you already have a specific project in mind, please complete our expression of interest form.

We will then get in touch to discuss your needs.



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