

*Supporting the use of best available, up-to-date, and relevant research evidence to inform managing the COVID-19 pandemic and establishing recovery and regeneration in Wales*

## WCEC Newsletter



### FOREWORD BY CENTRE DIRECTOR, PROFESSOR ADRIAN EDWARDS

I'm delighted to welcome you to this latest newsletter of the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre. We've been in business almost a year now, bringing the **key evidence together on several key topics for Welsh Government policy** that affect us all. We've **examined vaccines** – for example, summarising the key guidelines to support Public Health Wales in its campaign to encourage pregnant women to have the vaccine. There were no safety concerns from 200,000 women who had received the vaccine in pregnancy, and it is vital for the vaccine to still be given in pregnancy as 1 in 10 of all admissions to hospital with COVID were during pregnancy. We've also looked at how to encourage vaccine uptake in more disadvantaged communities, including working with community leaders, providing translators, overcoming transport barriers. We've looked at the impact of vaccination on further transmission of the virus, finding a reduction in transmission

from people who are vaccinated, and complete vaccination is better than partial.

Other important topics include ventilation in schools - this was vital in September 2021 to enable the re-opening of schools with minimum risks to students and staff. The Centre's review of disinfection methods in schools led to the targeting of resources towards improved ventilation, and now carbon dioxide monitors to assess the effectiveness of ventilation are a key part of day-to-day protection in schools.

We also looked at face masks, social distancing, and other measures for all, not just in schools, and this underpinned Welsh Government's advice about keeping these in public transport, shops, and health and social care settings.

All these issues matter to us and the Wales COVID Evidence Centre has been tackling them quickly and with **good scientific methods to contribute the evidence** to Welsh Government, Public Health Wales, and others in good time to inform the decisions they make.

Following our recent (2nd) consultation to identify priorities for Spring 22 – thank you to everyone who contributed to this process – we are now working on a suite of Reviews about **inequalities in particular groups of society**, and which are likely to have been made worse by the pandemic – how it has affected women, disabled people, people who identify as LGBTQ+, people experiencing homelessness or in prison, and the experiences of ethnic

minority staff in the NHS. We examine what has happened, what has been done to help and what has been found most effective.

We are also looking at **Long COVID** – the impact on people with the condition, the health and social care sectors and the costs and benefits of both the condition and the efforts to manage the condition. Both for Long COVID and more generally we are also now starting **a programme of new primary research**, building on the further research questions identified in our reviews to date.

This will be a major development of the COVID Evidence Centre for 2022, and will be a first for Wales among the COVID evidence centres around the world – linking primary research directly to the needs identified in evidence Reviews already conducted in a cohesive programme. We look forward to working with you in identifying the research priorities and delivering such important work to aid both management of the pandemic and the recovery and regeneration that follows.

We are also particularly pleased to be developing **Public Involvement contribution** to all our work in the Evidence Centre, and will be seeking further contributors to aid our work in prioritising research and research questions - with a particular focus on those communities and groups most affected by the pandemic. This will be a hugely valuable and exciting development going forwards. We look forward to working with you all on these important issues through 2022.

## Work programme

### GOOD QUESTIONS, ANSWERED QUICKLY

With the remit of 'good questions, answered quickly', we work with our stakeholders to prioritise questions that are answerable from the research evidence, and which help us to understand the impact of the pandemic on the health and care delivery systems in Wales. This ensures that we meet the greatest health and wider needs of communities and people in Wales, and help us to recover and rebuild.

Research questions are prioritised according to relevance (to the current or future COVID-19 context in Wales), importance of the evidence gap (scale, cost, consequence), potential benefits, potential for translation into practice and need for timely information (urgency).

We recently conducted a second question prioritisation process, and our exciting new Work Programme has been published. This shows the new questions that we are now starting to answer.

Questions include issues around the impact of COVID-19 on inequalities, cancer services, surgical backlogs, remote GP consultations, Long COVID, non-pharmaceutical interventions, long term medical conditions, personal protective behaviours, vaccine uptake, and COVID-19 transmission.

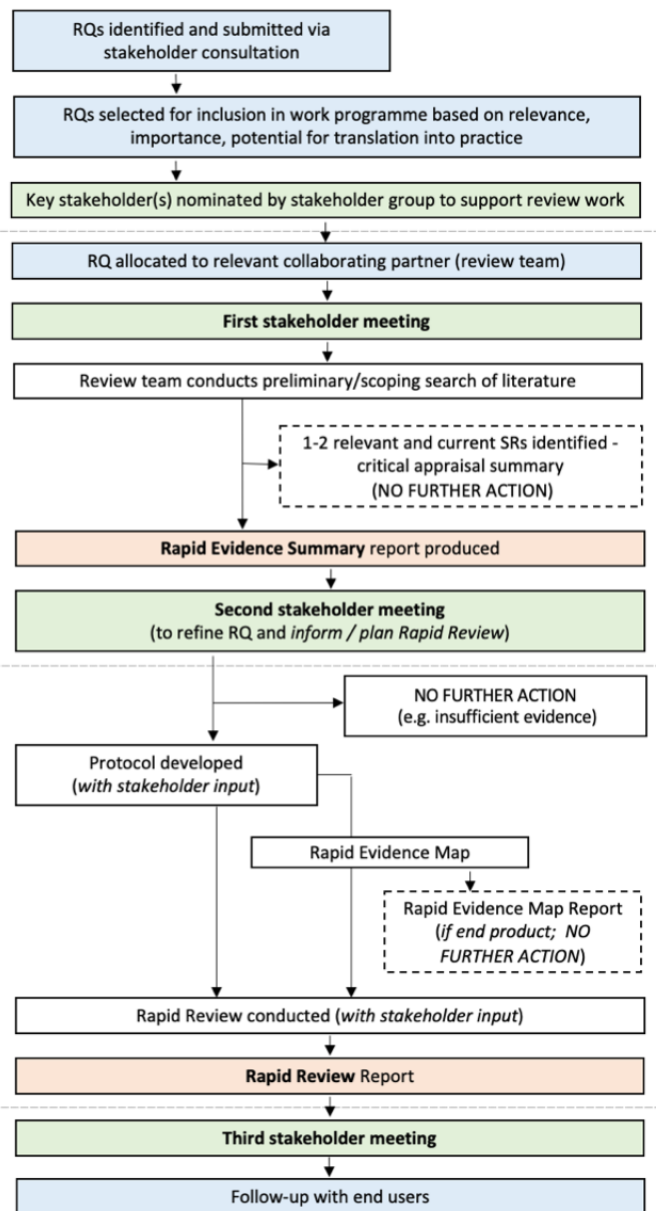
The questions have been asked by stakeholders including Welsh Government groups, Social Care Wales, Health Boards, Medical Directors, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Audiology Scientific Advisory group, the Royal College of Podiatry and public representative groups.

#### Needs assessment – PRIORITISATION PROCESS for selecting research questions (RQs)

#### Question refinement – REVIEW PROCESS PHASE I - Rapid Evidence Summary (~1 week)

#### REVIEW PROCESS PHASE II - Rapid review (1-2 months)

#### Knowledge mobilisation



## Public involvement

We know that high quality public involvement can make a real difference to research and also the way in which findings are made accessible, used and shared to make a difference. We have already included groups of public members as stakeholders to identify important questions to the Centre. We are now very excited to be shortly working with members of the public who are joining our team in the Evidence Centre. This involvement will be for all the

processes, from establishing research questions, including advising on knowledge mobilisation and ensuring that our reports are translated into information that can be easily understood. We will shortly be recruiting more members of the public to be involved in prioritising future research and questions that are important and of relevance to communities in Wales with a particular focus on working with under-served communities and groups most affected by the pandemic.

## Our reports

### RAPID EVIDENCE SUMMARIES (RES) AND RAPID REVIEWS (RR)

Our reports are produced very rapidly to ensure that they can inform policy and practice in a timely manner. The rapid production of these reports means that while the information is useful, there may be limitations. If there is an ongoing need for information, we consider doing a 'living review' that may be updated. This is the case for a question on [COVID-19 transmission in vaccinated populations](#) as these changes according to vaccination uptake and the strains of COVID-19 circulating. We are currently working together with the UK Health Security Agency (UK HSA) to produce regularly updated reports.

We ensure that our methods and reports are shared with other groups undertaking COVID-19 rapid evidence evaluations, including the UK HSA, NICE Wales, and [COVID-END](#). This avoids duplication and shares best practice.

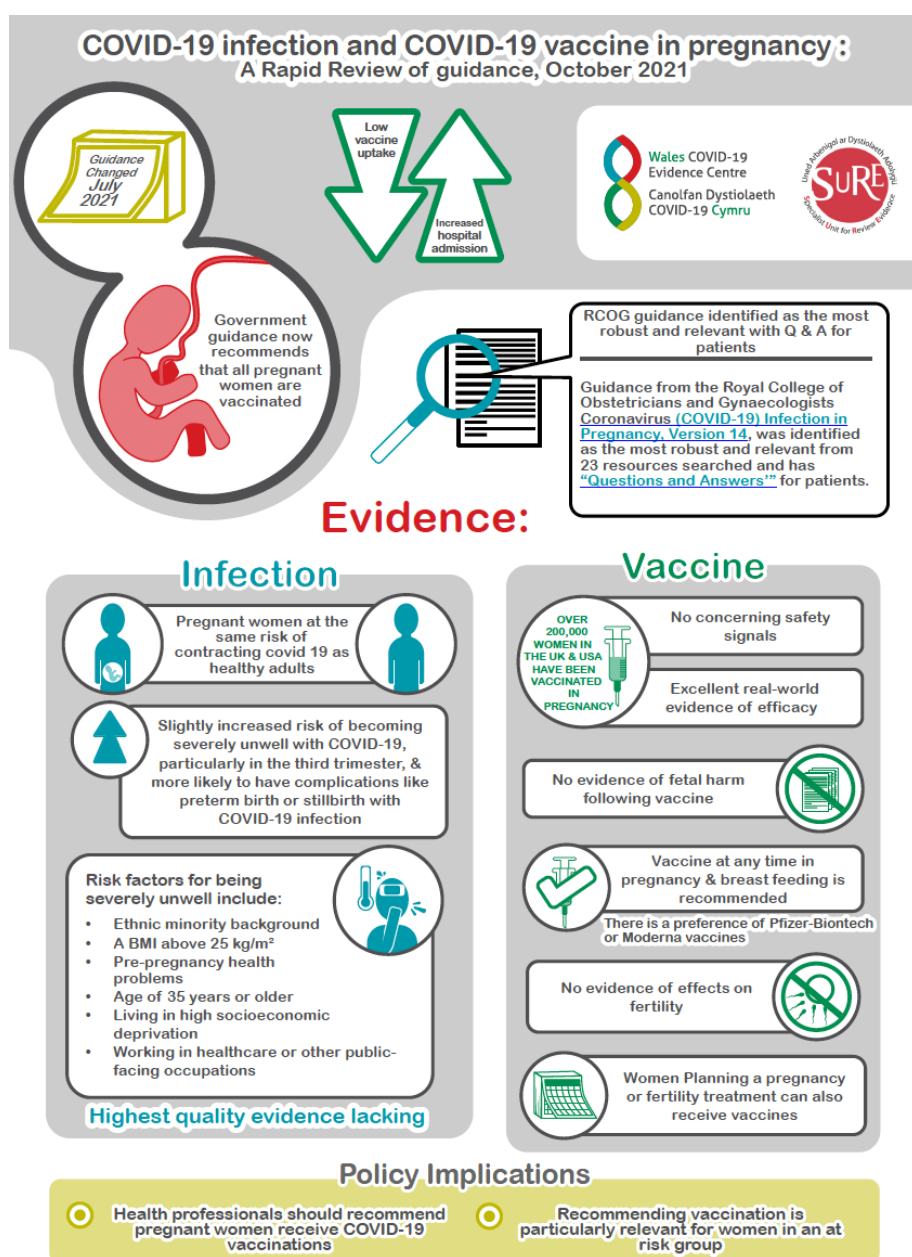
You can view our full list of reports [here](#). As reports are being produced rapidly this list is updated frequently. Our reports are regularly used to inform policymakers, for example, [RR00012](#), [RR00018](#), [RES00015](#), [RR00026](#) which were included in the January 2022 summary of advice from the [Welsh Government Technical Advisory Cell](#).

Other recent reports are listed below:

- Which innovations can improve timeliness of investigations and address the backlog in endoscopy for patients with potential symptoms of upper and lower Gastrointestinal (GI) cancers? [RR 00003](#)
- The effectiveness of service delivery interventions for adult orthopaedic patients on a surgical waiting list [RR 00008](#)
- The effectiveness of infection prevention and control measures applied in education and childcare settings for children: a summary and critical appraisal. [RR 00011](#)

- What is the impact of educational and other restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic on children aged 3-13 years? [RR 00013](#)
- A rapid review of strategies to support learning and wellbeing among 16-19 year old learners who have experienced significant disruption in their education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic [RR 00016](#)

- Summary of Active and Prospective Long-COVID Research in Wales Report [000017](#)
- What is the evidence of direct harm from COVID-19 infection and COVID-19 vaccine in pregnant/post-partum women and the unborn child? [RES 00024](#)
- The efficacy, effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 disinfection methods (including ozone machines) in educational settings for children and young people [RES 00023](#)



The rapid evidence summary was produced in October 2021, and is available at: [http://www.primecentre.wales/resources/RES/RES00024\\_Wales\\_COVID-19\\_Evidence\\_Centre-Pregnant%2C\\_Post\\_Partum\\_Women\\_unborn\\_child.pdf](http://www.primecentre.wales/resources/RES/RES00024_Wales_COVID-19_Evidence_Centre-Pregnant%2C_Post_Partum_Women_unborn_child.pdf)

Infographic to illustrate findings from the rapid review: What is the evidence of direct harm from COVID-19 infection and COVID-19 vaccine in pregnant/post-partum women and the unborn child? RES\_00024 (October 2021)

## Forthcoming event Celebration Symposium: A year of impact

MARCH 23, 10:00-13:00

*With an opening address by Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales*

The team would like to invite you to this forthcoming (virtual) event where they will share their achievements from their first year and highlight the difference their work has made.

The Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre will also present the questions that have been accepted onto their Work Programme for the first half of 2022 and invite you to take part in an interactive session to help prioritise research needs and questions for the Centre.

View the [agenda here](#) and [register here](#).

For further information contact:

WC19EC@Cardiff.ac.uk

Website. [Twitter](#) #WalesCovidEvidence

## Previous event: Evidence into Practice Symposium

Our last [Evidence into Practice Symposium](#) took place in December 2021. This was focused on 'The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, children and young people'. The on-line event was attended by over 100 participants.

The Symposium was opened by the **Minister for Health and Social Services Eluned Morgan MS** who said: "Over the last 19 months the research landscape has been transformed to meet the urgent needs created by the pandemic, and the response of the research community in Wales has been nothing short of incredible. The Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre is a strong example of that."

**Mari James, Chair of the PRIME SUPER Group**, a group of members of the public who support research activities at the Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research, said:

"The Symposium was very encouraging, not only showing how the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre swiftly produce important evidence of key aspects of the coronavirus pandemic as it applies to Wales, but also in bringing academics and Welsh Government together to produce evidence based policy and practice. It is also pleasing to hear that patient and public experience is at the heart of the Centre."

You can find the presentations from the WCEC partner groups [here](#).

## Meet the team: Wales Centre for Evidence Based Care (WCEBC)

The [Wales Centre for Evidence Based Care \(WCEBC\)](#) is a JBI Centre of Excellence based in the School of Healthcare Sciences, Cardiff University. We celebrated our 15th anniversary as a centre in 2021. The centre consists of a core steering group and several associate members internal and external to the school.

The main activities of the centre relate to education, evidence synthesis including systematic reviews (SRs), and implementation projects. We have presented our work nationally and internationally and collaborate in

developing and promoting SR methodologies through JBI. We provide JBI SR and implementation workshops to internal and external participants and assist staff undertaking SRs which support research funding applications. In addition, we undertake commissioned and grant funded work for internal and external organisations, examples have included the Schools of psychology and engineering, Cardiff University, James Lind Alliance, Welsh Assembly Government, NHS Mental Health Delivery Unit, Royal College of Midwives, and Velindre UHB.

In April 2021 we were commissioned by the Wales COVID-19 Evidence Centre to produce rapid reviews answering healthcare related questions provided by stakeholders related to Covid-19. The core team for this project are [Dr Judith Carrier](#), Reader, [Deborah Edwards](#), Research fellow,



[Dr Judit Csontos](#), Research Associate, and [Liz Gillen](#), Information specialist. Some of our published reviews are listed below:

- [00004\\_RR](#)
- [00016\\_RR](#)
- [00023\\_RES](#)

This work has been presented at Welsh Government briefing sessions and at the inaugural [WCEC Evidence into Practice Symposium](#).