BUILDING BRIDGES, BREAKING BARRIERS: the Senedd knowledge exchange strategy's first year

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The Welsh Parliament is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people.

Commonly known as the Senedd, it makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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Welsh Parliament Cardiff Bay CF99 1NS

Tel: 0300 200 6565

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RIGOROUS AND IMPARTIAL RESEARCH EVIDENCE IS ESSENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY AND GOOD LAW-MAKING.

In autumn 2021 the Senedd launched its first **knowledge exchange strategy** to strengthen links between the Senedd and the research community in Wales and beyond. The strategy aims to broaden, deepen, and diversify the research evidence and expertise available to Members, staff, and committees, to improve the quality of scrutiny and law-making.

The first year of the strategy's implementation has seen a shift in the Senedd's approach to knowledge exchange, towards a broader and more strategic approach to engaging with the research community.

We have:

- Launched a new Senedd Knowledge Exchange Network to disseminate engagement opportunities, which currently has more than 250 members from over 100 institutions
- Developed new connections with research institutions, research councils, and research networks, across Wales, the UK, and beyond
- Piloted innovative new ways of engaging with the research community, including through the Senedd's first committee Areas of Research Interest (ARIs)
- Commissioned **new research** in areas of interest to Members and committees
- Delivered training to hundreds of researchers and published new guidance on how to effectively engage with the Senedd
- Hosted nine PhD students through the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Policy Internship Scheme

- Held an exchange day between Senedd officials and researchers from Cardiff University's SPARK campus, the world's first social science research park
- Supported development of the Senedd's new committee evidence diversity monitoring system, and used the data to understand the barriers researchers face to engaging with the Senedd
- Exchanged experiences, advice, and knowledge with parliaments around the world on post-legislative scrutiny and gender sensitive scrutiny

These activities have been delivered by a wide range of Senedd Commission staff, from Senedd Research to committee services, and with the support of Engagement , Legal, and Governance teams, alongside many external partners.

Knowledge exchange strategy objectives

- Sell the Senedd as a place of influence
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Make it easy for researchers to engage with the Senedd



Diversify the evidence used by the Senedd



Broaden and deepen the evidence base available to the Senedd



Make the most of internal expertise, skills and experience



Design better parliamentary services, and evaluate effectiveness

NEW CONNECTIONS

To develop a network of researchers from diverse disciplines, backgrounds, institutions, and perspectives, we have:

 Created a new Senedd Knowledge Exchange Network, made up of over 250 people in over 100 research institutions, alongside a new Senedd Knowledge Exchange brand and refreshed webpages. A

monthly Network newsletter disseminates opportunities to engage with the Senedd, specifically targeted at the research community. This includes open committee consultations, research commissions, calls for expertise, events, training, guidance and much more. Feedback on the newsletter has been universally positive, with researchers and knowledge mobilisers appreciating the targeted one-stop-shop approach to summarising opportunities to engage with the Senedd.

"I wanted to email a big thank you for sending this [network newsletter]. I found the information very useful and I have disseminated several aspects to the researchers I support."

Knowledge mobiliser in UK university

 Strengthened relationships with research organisations with strategic relevance to the research interests of the Senedd, including the Learned Society for Wales, UKRI, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Welsh Crucible, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD), Cardiff University's SPARK campus, the Wales Centre for Public Policy, the Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) project, and other UK and European parliaments.

Connections have also been developed with other research centres such as the ESRC Centre for Care, Health and Care Research Wales, and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics for the benefit of research and committee teams.

NEW ENGAGEMENT METHODS

To experiment with new methods of engaging researchers, we have:

 Piloted a new approach to identifying expertise and research evidence for committees through Areas of Research Interest (ARIs).
 ARIs are a way to diversify the evidence received by committees and identify and fill gaps in evidence. ARIs help committees identify research evidence and expertise in advance of inquiries to support scrutiny and to help find witnesses who haven't engaged with the Senedd before.

Following a Business Directorate-wide knowledge exchange workshop with the UK Parliament in March, two committees identified four ARIs, which were launched in September.

Within one week, 27 researchers from 16 institutions across the UK had signed up, 75% of whom hadn't previously engaged with the Senedd. We were also successful in getting CAPE funding for a Policy Fellow to support this work from October 2022, drawing on their experience leading ARIs in the UK Parliament.

- Held a roundtable discussion with academics from the expert register to inform the Health and Social Care Committee's work programme, which drew out issues not on the committee's radar. The topics identified by the discussion informed five articles written by Senedd Research researchers on unpaid carers, development of the vaccination programme, the social care workforce, long COVID and children and young people's mental health.
- Supported the establishment of an evidence diversity monitoring system for Senedd committees. The data gathered by the system, alongside other sources such as the **Opening Up Parliament** report, is being used to better understand who gives evidence, who doesn't, and the barriers faced by researchers (and others) to engaging with the Senedd and ways to overcome them.

Building bridges, breaking barriers: the Senedd knowledge exchange strategy's first year



"The nature of our Committee's work is complex and long term; this means we must take many different approaches to collecting evidence and expertise. Areas of Research Interest are a tried and tested way of engaging with the research community and tapping into new and future research. They will help us to make sure that our scrutiny choices and our law-making is informed by the best possible research evidence and expertise, alongside our other stakeholder groups."

Llyr Gruffydd MS, Chair of the Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee



"The academics [who attended the Committee's roundtable discussion] were sourced from the Senedd's COVID Expert Register, which is an invaluable source of expertise and research for committees. We hope that in the Sixth Senedd we will build strong relationships with the research community to ensure our work is based on the best and more diverse evidence, to help us hold the government to account and represent the interests of the people of Wales".

Russell George MS, Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee

NEW TRAINING AND GUIDANCE

To increase the understanding of the Senedd among the research community, we have:

 Delivered bespoke training sessions for more than 300 researchers and knowledge mobilisers in research institutions across Wales and beyond, and to over 150 researchers as part of the UK Parliament's 'Parliament for Researchers' training series, since April 2021. Training typically covers how the Senedd uses research, the Welsh policy landscape and roles of different institutions, and tips for engaging with the Senedd effectively.

Feedback from training sessions has been highly positive, and often results in futher engagement (submitting written evidence or signing up to ARIs).

"Everything was pure gold dust. From the outside, it can seem a mystery as to how devolved parliaments work and where research can fit in but this event clarified things a lot."

Feedback from training sessions

"Thanks for a fascinating talk that opened our eyes to the variety of ways that academics can assist parliament and government." "It was a fantastic event and a valuable opportunity to hear about such a wide range of relevant projects."

Senedd official

Feedback from training sessions

"This has been extremely useful Hannah! Super engaging and way more useful than similar sessions I have attended, really appreciate your honest and pragmatic take on this"

Feedback from training sessions

 Held an exchange day on children and young people research with SPARK at Cardiff University, the world's first social science research park, to connect researchers with officials and find areas of common interest to inform the Senedd's work. Senedd officials, including researchers and clerks working with the Children, Education, and Young People's (CYPE) committee, ran a morning session introducing the Senedd and how it uses research to influence policy. In the afternoon 20 researchers from five research centres outlined their current and upcoming research in short five minute presentations. Other researchers and members of SPARK also attended the event.

Officials and academic researchers had the chance to network and identify areas of common interest between research studies and Senedd business. This has already led to a direct impact on committee work, including a plan for Members to meet with research participants to provide a 'lived experience' perspective from birth parents whose children have been removed from their care to inform an inquiry. Academics involved in the event will also attend stakeholder events to speak directly with Members. There has also been a range of follow up engagements with various academic projects. Positive feedback from Commission staff and academics shows an appetite to run similar events in the future on other thematic issues.

- Continued to host three-month internships through the UKRI PhD Policy Internship Scheme, including nine since autumn 2021. Since 2006, Senedd Research has hosted 67 students through this scheme, providing students with a unique opportunity to experience the world of parliamentary policy-making, while providing the Senedd with more than £400,000 of in-kind staff resources.
- Published new guidance for researchers on writing for a parliamentary audience, in partnership with the UK, Scottish and Northern Irish legislatures.

NEW RESEARCH

We have commissioned a range of research to fill evidence gaps and support scrutiny, including:

- Research on public experiences and attitudes to social care during the pandemic
- A guest research briefing on designing agricultural policies
- Research and mapping of the **impact of the pandemic on bus services** in Wales
- A collaborative PhD with Aberystwyth University on <u>democratic</u> innovations
- A guest article on vaccine hesitancy
- Various commissions through the Brexit Academic Framework, including on the UK-Canada Trade Agreement, EU-UK divergence, Wales-UK divergence, intergovernmental commitments, and training for the Health and Social Care Committee

Additionally, the report and recommendations of Professor Diana Stirbu's **research into the effectiveness of Senedd committees** through a 2020 Academic Fellowship were published in November 2021.

INTERNATIONAL KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

We have also supported knowledge exchange at an international level including:

- Contributing to the design and piloting the Westminster Foundation for Democracy's international indicators for post-legislative scrutiny, and delivering a training session on post-legislative scrutiny for a University of London's Institute of Advanced Legislative Studies course
- Providing advice to the Luxembourg Parliament's new research and scientific advice unit
- Contributing a module to the Commonwealth Parliamentary
 Association's gender mainstreaming online course
- Continuing the Senedd's connection with International IDEA's INTER
 PARES project to strengthen the capacity of parliaments, through an ongoing 0.2 FTE secondment, and specific exchanges with Senedd staff on standards in public life and public engagement
- Contributing to academic literature on the Senedd, including a journal article on gender-sensitive scrutiny (publication forthcoming).

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WHAT'S NEXT?

The second year of the strategy's delivery will:

- Continue the Areas of Research Interest pilot, by evaluating the success of the initial stage, and experimenting with different uses for the repository of research and expertise
- Enhance the **guidance** available to (and targeted at) researchers for engaging with Senedd committees
- Explore improved ways to commission small-scale, more responsive research projects to fulfil Members' and committees' research needs
- Gather more impact stories and testimonials, and establish a central location to showcase them
- Provide training to committee teams on how to diversify evidence and identify knowledge exchange opportunities
- Create a partnership model for research institutions with strategic relevance to the Senedd's work
- Trial an events series for Members based on the learning from the SPARK exchange.

ACTION PLAN - ACTIVITY MONITORING

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
1. Sell the Senedd as a place of	1.1. Develop a 'Senedd Knowledge Exchange' brand and promotional materials	Autumn 2021	Development of brand and materials	Development of Senedd KE brand and templates for documents, Twitter slides, presentations etc. (completed Nov 21)	
impact	1.2. Collect testimonials and impact stories	Autumn 2021	Number of testimonials and impact stories collected	Testimonials gathered from Health Committee private session with COVID Expert Register members (Oct 21) Further testimonials to be gathered in 2022-23	
	1.3. Establish a network of ambassadors for the Senedd within the research community (including previous Academic Fellows, COVID expert register projects, and PhD interns)	Early 2022	Development of network and number of ambassadors signed up	Exploration of an ambassador programme in partnership with UK, Scottish, and NI legislatures - work ongoing, UK Parliament leading	
2. Make it easy for researcher s to engage with the Senedd	2.1. Create a new suite of tools and training for researchers and knowledge mobilisers (including how the Senedd works, how research is used, guidance on providing oral/written evidence, and writing for a parliamentary audience)	Autumn 2021	Number of resources developed and disseminated Number of training sessions run	Training conducted: WISERD away day, 40 participants (April 21) Welsh Crucible, 50 participants x 2 (May 21 and May 22) UK Parliament – engaging with devolved legislatures, 200 participants (June 21) Wales Migration Research Network, 20 participants (September 21) UKRI Future Leaders, 5 participants (Dec 21) Senedd/SPARK exchange day, 80 participants (July 22) Learned Society of Wales, 100 participants (Sept 22)	

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
				Cardiff Met - knowledge mobilisers, 5 participants (Sept 22) Cardiff Met School of Management, 12 participants (Oct 22) Bangor University, 38 participants (Oct 22) University of South Wales research impact course, 20 participants (Oct 22)	
				Tools	
				Writing for a parliamentary audience (2022) Refreshed Senedd Knowledge Exchange webpages (2022)	
				Additionally, Senedd Research hosted nine PhD students through the UKRI Policy Internships scheme between October 21 and October 22. This scheme provides students with the opportunity to learn about the policy-making process in a parliamentary context, to support the creation of the next generation of policy-wise researchers. The scheme also provides in-kind staff resources to the Senedd.	
	2.2. Create a single portal to help researchers find engagement opportunities, promote resources and disseminate information (such as a dedicated Senedd Knowledge Exchange Twitter account, and online portal, or regular mailout)	Autumn 2021	Development of portal or Twitter account	Creation of Network newsletter (Dec 21) Newsletters sent in December 21, February 22, March 22, May 22, June 22 and Sept 22	
	2.3. Increase the range of opportunities for researchers to engage with the Senedd (such as guest articles, surveys, frameworks, and rapid evidence reviews) and	Ongoing	Number and range of opportunities offered	 Increased range of opportunities for researchers to engage with the Senedd, including: Areas of Research Interest Guest articles and research publications 	

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
	communicate the full range of current opportunities (including committee consultations, fellowships, research commissions, and expert adviser roles).			 A collaborative PhD A survey of the COVID expert register, and roundtable discussion with Health and Social Care Committee among respondents Exploration of using PhD students to conduct rapid evidence reviews for committees (as part of a UK Parliament fellowship) The SPARK exchange day Calls for expertise for specific committee needs UKRI PhD internships Ad-hoc research commissions The Knowledge Network newsletter has been used to disseminate all opportunities. 	
3. Diversify the evidence used by the Senedd	3.1. Establish a new 'Knowledge Network' with wider and more formal partnerships to increase the pool of experts to which the Senedd has access.	Ongoing	Number of partnerships established	 Creation of Senedd Knowledge Network (Dec 21) Promotion of network, resulting in over 250 sign up in over 100 institutions (by Sept 22) Regular meetings with: Learned Society for Wales, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), the Welsh Crucible, Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research and Data (WISERD), Cardiff University's SPARK campus, the Wales Centre for Public Policy, and the Capabilities in Academic Policy Engagement (CAPE) project. Additional meetings with ESRC Centre for Care, the Open University, Health and Care Research Wales, the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, Edinburgh University, University College London and Swansea University Migration Research Unit. Regular catch ups with UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, NI Assembly and Oireachtas knowledge exchange leads 	

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
				Participation in the UK Legislatures Knowledge Exchange Group, and UK Policy Knowledge Brokering Forum.	
	3.2. Use remote evidence to broaden and diversify expertise from Wales and beyond.	Ongoing	Proportion of evidence sessions using remote evidence	Evidence diversity monitoring data showed that, among the 18% of people submitting evidence who chose to respond to the monitoring survey, 88% participated remotely (either providing oral evidence or participating in citizen engagement activities).	
				Remote evidence used for Health and Social Care academic roundtable.	
	3.3. Provide training to clerks and researchers on how to diversify evidence and identify knowledge exchange opportunities	Early 2022	Provision of training/resource s	Planning ongoing as part of wider evidence diversity programme (to be continued into 2022-23)	
	3.4. Monitor who gives evidence to committees to discover which people, groups, organisations, and sectors are over- and under- represented.	From September 2021	Proportion of evidence received from research community	The committee evidence diversity monitoring pilot ran from November to May, and evaluated in June and July.	
				A second pilot began in September 22, and will run until the end of April 23.	
			community	The working group (including knowledge exchange lead) is currently planning interventions to improve the diversity of evidence.	
	3.5. Use information from committee witness monitoring to develop tools and adjustments to help overcome barriers to participation.	2022	Development of tools and adjustments	The evidence diversity monitoring working group (including knowledge exchange lead) is currently planning interventions to improve the diversity of evidence (ongoing work into 2022-23).	

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
4. Broaden and deepen the evidence used by the Senedd	4.1. Develop long term 'areas of research interest' to focus resources and strategically plan engagements like fellowships, frameworks, and events.	Autumn 2021	First set of ARIs developed for 2022	The Areas of Research Interest pilot was launched in September 22, with four ARIs identified by two committees. The project began in late 2021, with support from the UK Parliament and CAPE. A concept note was developed, and a workshop to share experiences of the UK Parliament was held for the business directorate in March 22. Two committee agreed to pilot ARIs. CAPE is funding a Policy Fellow (starting work in autumn 22) one day a week for 6 months to support the dissemination, mobilisation, analysis and evaluation of the ARIs pilot (ongoing into 2022-23).	
	4.2. Strategically identify gaps in evidence needed to conduct good scrutiny through committee and research work, and find ways to fill them.	Ongoing	Number of primary research commissions	 We have commissioned a range of research to fill evidence gaps and support scrutiny, including: Research on public experiences and attitudes to social care during the pandemic A guest research briefing on designing agricultural policies Research and mapping of the impact of the pandemic on bus services in Wales A collaborative PhD with Aberystwyth University on democratic innovations A guest article on vaccine hesitancy Various commissions through the Brexit Academic Framework, including on the UK-Canada Trade Agreement. EU-UK divergence. Wales-UK divergence, intergovernmental commitments, and training for the Health and Social Care Committee 	

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
	4.3. Use knowledge exchange activities to explore longer term, cross-portfolio issues that might not be on the immediate Senedd agenda.	Ongoing	Number of research commissions related to longer term, cross portfolio issues	No opportunities identified as yet, but the issues identified by the ARIs may be used to commission rapid evidence reviews.	
	4.4. Identify opportunities to add value to the political debate by finding new voices and new perspectives, including through novel types of research and data analysis.	Ongoing	Number of research commissions using new or novel research or analysis	The mapping and research work conducted by WISERD academics into the impact of the pandemic on bus services in Wales is an example of using data analysis to provide policy insights.	
5. Make the most of internal expertise, skills, and experience s	5.1. Share the expertise and experiences of officials with other parliaments (and other external audiences like politics students) through training, videos, and other knowledge products.	2022	Number of external engagements	 Participation in WFD international post-legislative scrutiny indicators - Senedd PLS working group comprehensive feedback on indicators (Nov 21) and self-assessment to pilot the indicators (Nov-April) Provision of advice to the Luxembourg Parliament's new research and scientific advice unit (2022) Contribution of a module to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's gender mainstreaming online course (June 22) Continuation of the Senedd's connection with International IDEA's INTER PARES project to strengthen the capacity of parliaments, through an ongoing 0.2 FTE secondment, and specific exchanges with Senedd staff on standards in public life and public engagement (2022) 	
	5.2. Share expertise and experiences internally for staff inductions and informal peer-to- peer learning.	2022	Number of internal engagements	No opportunities identified in 2021-22. PLCS exploring UK- wide collaborative parliamentary skills training programme.	

Strategic objective	Action	Original timescale	КРІ	Activity	Status
	5.3. Contribute to academic literature on the Senedd and parliamentary studies	2022	Number of contributions to academic literature	Collaborative PhD with Aberystwyth Uni on democratic innovations (ongoing) Journal article on gender-sensitive scrutiny (to be published)	
	5.4. Provide opportunities for learning and development for Senedd staff, through reverse fellowships and training	2022	Number of learning and development opportunities	Senedd Research staff attended training with WISERD on data visualisation (June 22)	
6. Design better parliament ary	6.1. Learn from other parliaments and academic literature to provide better services to Members and the public	Ongoing	Number of engagements	Training on equality-sensitive budget scrutiny for the Equality and Social Justice Committee, drawing on INTER PARES knowledge and experiences (Jan 22)	
services and evaluate effectivene ss	6.2. Use knowledge exchange schemes like fellowships to evaluate the effectiveness of services, process, and activities	Ongoing	Number of engagements	Professor Diana Stirbu's report and recommendations from a 2020 fellowship were published in November 2021, which have informed the knowledge exchange approach and evidence diversity monitoring. Progression of the other recommendations is currently under review.	
				Collaborative PhD with Aberystwyth Uni on democratic innovations (ongoing)	
	6.3. Design better internal research methods, such as consistent evidence weighting and knowledge management techniques	2022	Number of engagements	Exploration of SPARK researchers conducting training/workshops for researchers and clerks (work ongoing into 2021-22)	
	6.4. Use knowledge exchange for peer review	Ongoing	Number of engagements	No opportunities identified in 2021-22.	

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KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY THEORY OF CHANGE

Vision: Our knowledge exchange activities ensure that the best and most diverse range of research evidence is available to Members, committees, and staff to support effective law-making and rigorous scrutiny of government actions.

Inputs

- Senedd funding for knowledge exchange activities - staff and budget
- 2. Stirbu report
- 3. Evaluation of knowledge exchange in UK legislatures
- 4. Knowledge exchange strategy consultation
- 5. Senedd Futures report

Activities

- 1. Sell the Senedd as a place of influence
 - Development of KE brand , promotional materials, testimonials, case studies, network of ambassadors
- 2. Make it easy for researchers to engage with the Senedd
 - New suite of tools and training
 - Single location to advertise opportunities, and increase range of opportunities (
- 3. Diversify the evidence used by the Senedd
 - New partnerships
 - Harness remote evidence to diversify
 - Monitor who gives evidence to committees and develop tools to overcome barriers
- 4. Broaden and deepen the evidence used by the Senedd
 - Development of long term areas of research interest, to identify gaps, explore issues not on immediate agenda, and add value to debate (
- 5. Make the most of internal expertise, skills, and experience
 - Share expertise, skills, and experiences of Senedd officials with other parliaments, students, academics and other Senedd staff
 - Contribute to academic literature
 - Provide opportunities to staff learning and development
- 6. Design better parliamentary services and evaluate effectiveness
 - Learn from other parliaments and academic literature
 - Use KE activities for evaluation
 - Design better internal research methods
 - Use KE relationships for peer review

Programmes

- Engagement programme (tools, training, promotion, social media)
- Partnerships and networks
- ARIs (at Senedd level or committee level)
- Fellowship scheme
- UKRI PhD internship scheme
- Brexit Research Framework (until July 2022)
- COVID Register of Experts
- International engagement
- Staff development

Outcomes (short term)

Researchers understand the Senedd and its processes, and have the skills to engage

A more diverse group of researchers are engaged with the Senedd

Research evidence is valued by MSs and staff, and they have the skills to evaluate it

MSs and staff are more aware of how to access existing research evidence

Outcomes (medium term)

Senedd Research and other services are able to meet a broader range of evidence needs

Internal Senedd structures and practices evolve to enable and encourage the use of research for evidence-informed scrutiny, law-making and debate

Engagement with and impact on the Senedd is embedded into research institutions, researchers, research mobilisers, and funders' priorities

Incentive structures and work programmes of HEIs and the Senedd are more closely aligned to allow for more effective collaboration

Increased understanding globally about Senedd good practice and experiences (in parliamentary studies and capacity building programmes)

Impacts

Scrutiny, debate, and legislation in the Senedd (and in parliamentary democracies around the world) is strengthened, leading to positive change for society

Support to researchers, research funders, research mobilisers, and research institutions to increase understanding of, and engagement with, the Senedd

Support to MSs, Senedd Committees and staff to increase understanding of, and engagement with, research evidence.

Support to international stakeholders to share experiences, expertise and skills of the Senedd