

Sir David Cooksey  
Cooksey Review Secretariat  
HM Treasury, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London, SW1A 2HQ

28 July 2006

Dear Sir David,

Re: **REVIEW OF UK HEALTH RESEARCH**

I am writing in response to your invitation of 4 May to contribute to the Review of UK Health Research. Higher Education Wales (HEW) is the representative body for the 13 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Wales. We are aligned to Universities UK which is submitting an overall response to the review. Individual HEIs in Wales will also make their own responses. This submission focuses primarily on Review Question 12 which relates to the new fund and its relationship with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The context of health research in Wales is one where **there is a current and historic shortfall in health research funding**. The Welsh Assembly Government allocates 0.47% of its NHS budget to NHS Research and Development (R&D) compared to 0.9% of the NHS budget in England. It is also the case that MRC and other health related peer reviewed funding is well below the per capita level for England and Scotland due to a number of factors. Though Wales represents 5% of the UK HE sector, our HEIs receive only 1.4% of the MRC budget and 1.6% of other peer reviewed health research funding. Given these facts HEW believes that levels of NHS R&D funding in Wales should be reviewed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Our members are of the view that the governance structure and the funding policies of the new merged fund should reflect the fact that health policy is now largely devolved and that there are increasing policy divergences between the four parts of the UK. The amalgamation of an England-only function (NHS R&D funding) with a UK-wide function (MRC funds) will present a significant challenge to the governance arrangements and funding policies of the new fund. Therefore **HEW believes that the governance and funding protocols of the merged fund should be aligned to this devolved context** - perhaps by agreeing periodic memoranda of understanding or concordats with four health departments of the UK. This might prevent a harmful tendency to skew the use of funds intended for UK health research to reflect, in a disproportionate manner, the priorities of

the NHS in England. Given this risk of an unintended bias HEW believes that **the merged fund should not be housed in a Whitehall Department of State but should** maintain the independence that the MRC has sustained.

We do not at this stage wish to propose a detailed model of governance for the merged fund as it is not clear how the fund will relate to NHS R&D which is funded and controlled by the devolved administrations. HEW believes that **the UK Government should not legislate to make all NHS R&D a UK-wide function vested in the merged fund**. Such a move would have the potential effect of undermining the work of the Wales Office of Research and Development as the Assembly Government would lose the funding consequential for this budget line under the Barnett formula. This would be a backward step at a time when promising projects such as *Clinical Research Collaboration Cymru* have just been launched.

In conclusion, HEW wishes to reiterate the central point of this submission which is that the merged fund **must not result in health researchers in Welsh HEIs having access to funds on a less open or equitable basis than at present**. We also see the potential for your review to **raise the profile of health research in Wales helping decision makers to grant greater budgetary priority to health research within the Welsh context**.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on any aspect of this submission and we are happy that this letter be placed in the public domain.

Yours sincerely,

**Amanda Wilkinson**

**Director / Cyfarwyddwr**

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