NEWS
WISERD highlighted as ‘major resource’ in Diamond Review

RESEARCH
Read the latest updates on WISERD research projects

EVENTS
Launch of WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society

A NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
- Aberystwyth University
- Bangor University
- Cardiff University
- University of South Wales
- Swansea University
Introduction

The Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) is a national social science research institute. Taking comparative and longitudinal perspectives, and using innovative methods, it undertakes interdisciplinary and policy-relevant research across the fields of economics, sociology, geography and political science.

Incorporating a large and diverse range of research programmes, WISERD houses two ESRC-funded centres and aims to provide important pathways to impact and research outputs for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF).

WISERD successes to date have recently been recognised by the Diamond Review, which stated that WISERD was a major resource for Wales and recommended that it receive core funding.

Given the scale and reach of WISERD activities, many of which are continuing to develop, this publication aims to provide an overview of the major WISERD initiatives and outputs that have taken place over the last 18 months.
WISERD Research Reach

WISERD has developed strong international networks and undertakes substantive research in different countries and settings. In 2016, WISERD hosted a number of international visitors who participated in various activities, events and collaborative projects.

These included Professor Merril D. Silverstein from Syracuse University, Professor Filippo Barbera from the University of Torino, John Edwards from St. Francis Xavier University in Canada, Professor Sarbeswar Sahoo from the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi, Professor Jonathan Pratschke from the Department of Economics and Statistics (DISES) at the University of Salerno in Italy.

Professor David Grusky from the Department of Sociology at Stanford University, Professor Mike Hout from the Department of Sociology at New York University and Professor Matthew Snipp from the Department of Sociology at Stanford University presented keynote addresses at the WISERD Annual Conference 2016.
WISERD Highlighted as ‘Major Resource’ in Diamond Review

WISERD’s contribution as a major resource was recently recognised by the Independent Diamond Review. The Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales, was commissioned in 2014 and led by Professor Sir Ian Diamond.

"WISERD HAS DEVELOPED INTO A MAJOR RESOURCE FOR PROVIDING KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES."

The Diamond Review focused on widening access, supporting the skill needs of Wales, strengthening part-time and postgraduate provision in Wales, and long-term financial sustainability. It also assessed quality research funding and knowledge transfer.

On the contribution of WISERD, the Diamond Review said: "...it is clear that WISERD has developed into a major resource for providing knowledge transfer across a wide range of the social sciences."

The Diamond Review went further to recommend: "The Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) to receive core funding from the Welsh Government to impact on social policy, on a five year basis, against an expectation of the majority of its funding coming from projects."
**WISERD Income Profile**

WISERD has an outstanding track record of winning competitive research funding.

Figure 1 shows the funder profile to date and Figure 2 shows the research income since WISERD started, projected to 2021.

**Total WISERD research income to date:**

£24,950,727

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**Figure 1**

- ESRC
- HEFCW
- European Research Council
- European Union Horizon 2020
- Welsh Government
- Welsh European Funding Office
- National Institute for Social Care and Health Research
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- NORFACE
- 20+ Other Funders (under £100k)

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**Figure 2**


- WISERD 1 funding started in 2008
- WISERD 1 funding ended in 2012
- WISERD Civil Society funding started in 2014
- WISERD Civil Society funding ends mid-2019
WISERD Funded Projects

WISERD research includes a range of funded centres and substantive themes. This evolves over time as WISERD meets its strategic goals and as it responds to the policy and research environment. Figure 3 shows the spread of WISERD funded research as of October 2016.

**WISERD Civil Society** is an ESRC-funded research centre undertaking a five-year programme of multi-disciplinary, policy-relevant research addressing civil society in Wales, the UK and internationally.

**Horizon 2020 IMAJINE** (Integrative Mechanisms to Address Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe) is a major, externally funded research project addressing spatial injustice and territorial inequalities (read more on page 8).

The **Global-Rural** project aims to advance our understanding of the workings and impacts of globalisation in rural regions through the development and application of new conceptual and methodological approaches.

The **Administrative Data Research Centre Wales (ADRC-W)** is one of four national centres that have been established in the UK by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which uses cutting-edge technology to link and analyse de-identified administrative data to help inform social, economic and health-related research in the UK.

**WISERD Education** is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). The project aims to undertake research in order to sustain and enhance the quality of learning, and the standards of teaching and teacher education in Wales.

**Improving the Experience of Dementia and Enhancing Active Life (IDEAL)** is a project focusing on the potential for living well with dementia from the perspective of people with dementia and their primary carers.

**Total value of on-going research is £14 million**
New WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society

The WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society is a new interdisciplinary research centre at Aberystwyth University aimed at developing our understanding of contemporary politics and society in Wales, in the context of an inter-connected world.

**THE CENTRE WILL SUPPORT AND DELIVER WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, AND CONTRIBUTE TO PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE, DEBATES AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN WALES.**

The centre builds on the established reputations of the Institute of Welsh Politics and the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD) at Aberystwyth University. It brings together geographers, political scientists, psychologists and historians from the Institute of Geography, History, Politics and Psychology, and social scientists from any related departments with an interest in Wales.

The centre’s research activities are focused around three key themes, with interdisciplinary interaction and collaboration promoted through seminars and reading groups.

Key themes:
- Governance, Participation and Civil Society
- Language and Culture
- Global Connections
The Centre hosts three major externally funded research projects:

- ESRC WISERD/Civil Society research centre
- European Rural Council GLOBAL-RURAL project
- Horizon 2020 IMAJINE (Integrative Mechanisms to Address Spatial Justice and Territorial inequalities in Europe) project

It aims to use research on Welsh politics and society, comparative studies of Wales and other nations and regions, and analyses of Wales’s global connections, to make internationally significant, cutting-edge contributions to social science theories, debates and literatures.

Public engagement is central to the centre’s ethos, continuing the popular long-standing activities of the Institute of Welsh Politics, including an Annual Welsh Politics and Society Lecture, and public events in Aberystwyth and throughout Wales. Centre members also share their expertise through digital and social media.

Co-Directors: Dr Anwen Elias and Professor Michael Woods
Theme Leaders: Dr Taulant Guma, Dr Elin Royles and Dr Lucy Taylor

Education on Welsh politics and society, social science training and capacity building is supported through:

- Mentoring PhD students, including as part of the ESRC Wales Doctoral Training Centre
- Bespoke Continuing Professional Development courses
- The recently re-launched MA in Welsh Politics and Society

INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATIONS

The WISERD Centre for Welsh Politics and Society also functions as the Aberystwyth arm of WISERD, providing links with social scientists at Bangor University, Cardiff University, the University of South Wales and Swansea University, with opportunities to build research capacity through interdisciplinary and inter-institutional collaborations, training and capacity building workshops, and a coordinated approach to public engagement and policy impact.

IMAJINE – Horizon 2020 Funding Success

WISERD Aberystwyth has been successful in a European Horizon 2020 funding bid for a project about spatial injustice and territorial inequalities: 'Integrative Mechanisms for Addressing Spatial Justice and Territorial Inequalities in Europe (IMAJINE)', which started in January 2017.

The project addresses the following themes: 'Territorial Cohesion, Spatial Justice and Solidarity in Europe' and 'Regionalism, a Question of Political and Social Equality?' It integrates data and analysis from both themes to develop overarching conclusions and recommendations.

The core objective of IMAJINE is to formulate new integrative policy mechanisms to enable European, national and regional government agencies to more effectively address territorial inequalities within the European Union, and to imagine a future for European regions in which the distribution of resources is consistent with principles of social and spatial justice.

The interdisciplinary team in Aberystwyth are Professor Michael Woods, Professor Rhys Jones, Dr Anwen Elias, Dr Elin Royles, and Dr Maria Plotnikova from the Aberystwyth University Management and Business School. The total grant is just under €5 million with €1.2 million coming to Aberystwyth University.
Research Infrastructure Funding (RIF) for WISERD Education

WISERD Education has been awarded £215,000 of funding from Cardiff University for a continuation of the WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS).

“\textbf{I WELCOME THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, CAPTURING THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IS IMPORTANT TO HELP US DEVELOP POLICIES AND SERVICES IN WALES THAT MEET THEIR NEEDS.}”

Kirsty Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education

The funding builds on a £1m grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to increase Wales’s capacity for Wales’s capacity to carry out high-quality educational research and to improve the quality of learning in Wales.

More than 1,200 pupils in over 30 schools around Wales have taken part in the WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study so far. This is a longitudinal study tracking a sample of pupils at different points in time. To date, there have been four annual waves of data collection from four cohorts with pupils aged eight, 10, 12 and 14 years. The data gathered will provide valuable information for academic researchers, policy makers and teachers.

More than 1,200 pupils in over 30 schools around Wales have taken part in the WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study (WMCS) so far.
Evaluation of the Pupil Deprivation Grant

The Welsh Government has published the latest evaluation of its Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) – a programme that sees additional funding being allocated to schools for looked after children and those pupils who are eligible for free school meals.

The report produced by Ipsos MORI and WISERD shows that:

- Teachers believe the Pupil Deprivation Grant is making a real difference to target pupils and they are reporting significant improvements in English and Maths grades as a result.

- Schools are using increasingly sophisticated systems to ensure the grant reaches the pupils it is designed to help.

- Schools are using the grant to increase the number and skills of teaching assistants who can implement interventions that will narrow the attainment gap.

- At Key Stage 2 the rates of improvement of pupils eligible for free school meals in the subjects of English, Welsh, Science and Maths is nearly double that of other pupils.

- Improvement in attendance of pupils eligible for free school meals has accelerated since the introduction of the grant.

“WHilst progress is being made, the gap is still far too wide. We must keep working to break it down.”

Welsh Government Education Minister at the time, Huw Lewis, said: “Breaking that stubborn link between poverty and low attainment has always been a priority of mine, I simply do not accept that a young person’s success in life should be dictated by the wealth of their family.

“I am very encouraged by these statistics and the evaluation report which show that our policies to narrow the gap and drive up the performance of pupils from less well-off families are making a real and tangible difference.

“Whilst progress is being made, the gap is still far too wide. We must keep working to break it down so we can ensure all our learners, including those from less well-off families are given every opportunity to succeed and fulfil their potential in life.”

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Widening Access Research

The Widening Access to Higher Education Evaluation guidance was developed by WISERD as part of research jointly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). The guidance was launched in 2016 and was praised by Huw Lewis, then Welsh Government Education Minister, as one of the most useful analyses of Widening Access that he had seen from the UK.
FINDINGS

The WISERD project, Young People and the EU Referendum, engaging with young people before, during and after the referendum, found that:

- Almost two thirds of under-30s supported Remain, compared with less than a third of the over-65s.
- Contrary to claims that young people relied on social media for their information about the EU referendum, 57% said that they used television as their main source of information; 35% used Facebook and only 17% used Twitter.
- Young people were more likely to trust information from the Remain campaign than Leave: 35% said they trusted the messages from Remain more than Leave, compared with 17% who trusted Leave more than Remain. One in three, however, didn’t trust either.

EVENT: YOUNG PEOPLE, POLITICS AND THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN WALES

The WISERD event, Young people, politics and the future direction of youth engagement in Wales, was held in the Pierhead building in partnership with Youth Cymru (Lais Ifanc) and the Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), jointly sponsored by Alun Davies AM, Bethan Jenkins AM, Darren Millar AM and supported by the National Assembly for Wales Youth Engagement Team. Research findings were shared through the screening of two short film resources – designed for practitioners and made with young people.

DECISIONS MADE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Christian Webb from Youth Cymru commented on the event: "Working with WISERD has shown what we can achieve when we bring researchers, youth practitioners, and young people together. Today’s discussions will seek to lay the foundations of how we engage with young people in the future. Decisions are more effective and sustainable when made with young people rather than for young people. This is the ethos which should guide governments, decision makers, and organisations who work with young people as we map out our new place in Europe."

The project is taking this work forward by looking at youth engagement with politics overall and the lessons that can be learned following the EU Referendum campaigns and vote.
Informing Policy Development and Service Provision with Innovative GIS Research

WISERD researchers at the University of South Wales are quantifying and mapping levels of geographical accessibility to vital public and private services with sophisticated models built using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) technology.

**Academic recognition** has taken the form of presentations at national and international conferences, including a presentation at the *European Colloquium of Theoretical and Quantitative Geography*, held in Bari, Italy in September 2015, funding from Ordnance Survey for a PhD studentship and for a follow-up knowledge exchange programme, and research papers published in international journals including *Health and Place*, the premier journal in the field of health geography.

The **policy significance of this research** is recognised by the Welsh Government which is currently considering using the same approach when updating the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation Access to Services domain for 2017/2018. Presentations have been made to Welsh Government officials highlighting the benefits of the approach used to calculate accessibility scores. Furthermore, the practical applicability and direct policy relevance of this research is demonstrated by the following three major projects, which have either been completed or are on-going as of September 2016.

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**Mapping Access to Sporting Infrastructure**

WISERD researchers at the University of South Wales have developed software tools that provide a user-friendly interface to allow non-GIS experts to compute a variety of complex accessibility measures. Acting on a dedicated spatial database of sports facilities, census-derived socioeconomic data and a topologically structured transport network, the resultant output indices may be used to explore spatial variations in the sporting infrastructure of Wales. This research was funded by **Sport Wales** under the Illuminate initiative.

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**Mapping Childcare for Policy Makers**

WISERD researchers at the University of South Wales have been exploring the use of similar tools and techniques in the role of childcare gap analysis. The **Welsh Government** has made a policy commitment in their work programme, *'Taking Wales Forward 2016-2021'* , to provide 30 hours free childcare a week for working parents of three- and four-year-olds, 48 weeks of the year. As part of this commitment, the Welsh Government has engaged WISERD researchers to undertake analysis of the current distribution of childcare provision relative to potential demand. The Welsh Government expect to use the findings coming out of these analyses to address potential gaps in childcare provision, to help it to manage policy implementation, and to inform future policy development.

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**Mapping Cancer Care**

WISERD researchers at the University of South Wales are exploring the opportunities that exist to take tools currently developed for proprietary software packages and engineer equivalent open source solutions, specifically for measuring access to cancer screening, and cancer support services management and planning. To further these aims, a KESS II funded PhD studentship in collaboration with **Tenovus Cancer Care** commenced in October 2016 with the aim of broadening the availability of advanced analytical research tools that may be used to support health analysts in planning the provision of cancer services in Wales.
Labour Markets, Regional Economics, Public Policy and the Welsh Economy

Labour market economists have appeared frequently in the media recently talking about WISERD research areas in relation to the steel industry, work and Wales.

“We are likely to have a more successful industry if we remain in the EU” David Blackaby, Euronews (France) report.

Sky News interviewed Professor David Blackaby, who described steel as “a strategic industry, a foundation industry”, which is vital if we want a manufacturing industry in this country.


Professor Stephen Drinkwater was broadcast as part of a feature on Share Radio about whether a cut in the number of low-skilled EU migrants would hurt the UK economy.

Professor David Blackaby’s views on the future of Tata Steel were broadcast on 26 BBC channels and radio stations, including BBC News 24, News at Six, Radio 2, Radio 4, Radio 5 Live, Radio Wales, Radio Scotland, Radio London and Radio Jersey.

WISERD researchers’ recent work on employment issues includes a chapter in the book, ‘Unequal Britain at Work’, edited by Alan Felstead, Duncan Gallie, and Francis Green, which was published in August 2016 by Oxford University Press. The chapter, titled ‘Is the Public Sector Pay Advantage Explained by Differences in Work Quality?’ was authored by David Blackaby, Alan Felstead, Melanie Jones, Gerry Makepeace, Phil Murphy and Victoria Wass.

Research by WISERD also underpinned two of the four impact case studies submitted to REF2014 by Swansea University to the Business and Management Panel. Feedback provided to the university from this panel stated the impact from both of these case studies was outstanding in terms of their reach and significance.
Civil Society Fieldwork in North East Wales

Members of the WISERD Civil Society research team at Bangor University are conducting an ongoing study into the experiences of civic participation at two fieldwork sites in north east Wales. To date, they have mapped local civil society groups and surveyed the local population. By collecting life histories from people who are active in local associations they have engaged with groups and events at each site.

WISERD’s Civil Society Programme Reveals Gender Equality Challenges Across UN’s Five Sub-Regions of Africa

Research by WISERD Co-Director, Professor Paul Chaney examines civil society organisations’ input into African states’ implementation of the gender mainstreaming goals set out in the United Nations’ Beijing Declaration. Professor Chaney argues that while gender mainstreaming represents a generational opportunity to apply a feminist political economic framework to development in Africa, current practice falls short of the sought-after participative democratic model of promoting equality and tackling discrimination.

The findings reveal key differences in state and civil society organisations’ framing of gender equality issues.

Moreover, the analysis reveals issues over conceptual clarity and a disjuncture in the prioritisation of key gendered issues such as poverty, economic inequality and conflict resolution.

Social Innovation in Home Care of Older People

WISERD Director, Professor Ian Rees Jones, collaborated on a Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRES) report on innovation in home care that was launched at the Fairer Futures: Reshaping Care for Older People Symposium.

Published to coincide with the symposium, a collaboration between Alliance Manchester Business School’s Health Services Research Centre, WISERD, the Fairness at Work Research Centre and the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research into Ageing, the report argues that having good intentions alone in adult care is not enough.

The findings reveal that the central state and expert community have promoted the worthy aims of personalisation of care and outcomes-based commissioning. However, the report argues that (partly as a result of austerity cuts) adult social care is a sector now facing multiple crises: there is a financial crisis in terms of service cuts, a care quality crisis, a workforce recruitment and retention crisis and a provider crisis resulting from squeezed profit margins.

This is the second of two reports on social care that have been underpinned by WISERD social care research. The earlier report, ‘Where does the money go? The financialised chains and the crisis in social care’, featured in the December 2016 edition of Private Eye, looks at the allocation of funds in care homes. It uses follow-the-money research to show that putting in more state money is in itself no solution, as the care chains owners are adept at taking money out. Both reports have been well received within the Welsh Government and work is ongoing to develop further policy-relevant research in this area.

CRES}
WISERD Events

WISERD is committed to capacity building within the social sciences in Wales, the UK and internationally. This is achieved through an ongoing series of workshops, seminars and conferences, aimed at those with an interest in the social sciences.

WISERD ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2016

Wales’ largest social science conference took place at the new Bay Campus at Swansea University in July 2016. The seventh annual event brought together practitioners, policy makers and social scientists to discuss and debate themes such as health, social care, wellbeing, education, culture and values, environment, labour markets, devolution, and civil society – with over 70 papers presented.

Headlining the conference were four keynote speakers: Otón Solís, President and three-times presidential candidate of the Citizens’ Action Party (Partido Acción Cindadana) in Costa Rica; Professor Andrew Oswald, Professor of Economics, University of Warwick; Mike Hout, Professor of Sociology, New York University; and David Grusky, Professor of Sociology, Stanford University. Opening the event was former First Minister, The Right Honourable Rhodri Morgan.
ADRC - INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON DATA LINKAGE
BIG DATA OR BIG RUBBISH?

WISERD hosts the Administrative Data Research Centre Wales (ADRC-W) service facility within Cardiff and works with accredited researchers to facilitate access to, and linking of, de-identified data on themes such as education, health and social mobility data, and many other long-standing records from different government departments. As part of its international fellowship successes, WISERD held a one-day international symposium on data linkage ‘Big Data or Big Rubbish? The Contribution of Data Linkage to Social Science’ in July 2016.

WALES LABOUR MARKET SUMMIT 2016

WISERD Bangor associates, Dr Tony Dobbins and Dr Alex Plows, held the second Wales Labour Market Summit on the theme Comparing Policy Interventions to Challenge ‘Business as Usual’, held in Bangor in September.

The Labour Market Summit is an annual knowledge exchange event designed as a platform to compare, debate, and inform policy interventions in response to labour market change, primarily in North Wales, but with opportunities to compare regional and national labour market interventions elsewhere in the UK. The 60 participants included stakeholders, practitioners and academics.

WISERD/CRESC INTERNATIONAL RADICAL SOCIAL INNOVATION COLLOQUIUM

As part of the WISERD Civil Society programme, WISERD and the Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC) jointly organised an international colloquium at Cardiff University for academics, policy makers and civil society organisations involved in social innovation initiatives: ‘The Radical Social Innovation Colloquium’, in May 2016.

The event brought together an eclectic mix of academics, practitioners and activists to share research and knowledge across a range of themes. An edited collection is being planned and a second international colloquium is scheduled for May 2017.
**MEASURING WELL-BEING WORKSHOP**

WISERD held a collaborative event on the understanding, measurement and promotion of well-being at the University of South Wales’s Glamorgan Business Centre in June 2015. The event brought together colleagues from the University of South Wales, the Office for National Statistics and the Welsh Government, along with researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds. It offered a constructive discussion of the relationship between conceptual and empirical approaches to well-being and its measurement.

Well-being, and its monitoring and promotion, have been pushed to the forefront of policy and wider public discourse in recent years. The Welsh Government, like others elsewhere, seeks reliable indicators as a way of tracking a feature of our lives which, at face value, could hardly be more important. It seems foundational to many, or perhaps all other aspects of social life. However, the readiness with which well-being is invoked may mask complexities and challenges about how we approach it.

The event offered critical tools with which to address well-being in contemporary Wales, and a deliberative forum between researchers arriving at these challenges from a range of different methodological and theoretical directions.

**BANGOR SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

WISERD was a significant partner in the Bangor School of Social Sciences 50th anniversary celebrations, 2016. WISERD colleagues delivered a session on Communities, Cultures, Languages and Identities and WISERD Director, Professor Ian Rees Jones provided a commentary at the end of the day. The event showcased the school’s contribution to social sciences research in Wales and beyond.
Publications

WISERD produces a range of publications for academic, policy, and practitioner audiences, including newsletters and reports. Here are some recent examples of where you can read more about WISERD research:

Journal Articles


Book Chapters


Books

