

**Module 1**

Witness Name: Peter Halligan

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: 18

Dated: May 2023

**IN THE UK COVID-19 INQUIRY**

**Before the Right Honourable Baroness Hallett D.B.E**

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**STATEMENT OF PROFESSOR PETER HALLIGAN**

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**I, PETER HALLIGAN, will say as follows:**

1. This statement is prepared in response to a request dated 10 February 2023 (the request) that wishes to draw upon my experience as the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales between March 2018 and January 2020 (I remained in post until February 2022). I have drawn on support from the Welsh Government in preparing this statement.

**Background**

2. I was born in Dublin, Ireland and gained qualifications in psychology, philosophy and education at University College Dublin. My current qualifications and honours are CBE DSc PhD FBPS FMedSci FLSW CPsychol. In 1985, I moved from Ireland to work at Rivermead, a specialist NHS neuro-rehabilitation Centre in Oxford as a research psychologist while also undertaking a PhD in neuropsychology. In 1987, I joined the Neuropsychology Unit at the Department of Clinical Neurology in Oxford University and in 1997, following a MRC Senior Research Fellowship award, I joined the Department of Experimental Psychology in Oxford. In 2000, I moved to the Cardiff School of Psychology as a Distinguished Research Professor. In 2003, I became the founding Director of the Cardiff University's Brain Research Imaging Centre (CUBRIC) and later in 2006 Dean of

Interdisciplinary Studies at Cardiff University. In 2012, I joined Universities Wales as Head of Strategic Futures as part of a 2-year secondment before joining the Learned Society of Wales in 2015 as Chief Executive.

3. Whilst at Cardiff University, I played a central role in establishing Cardiff University's Brain Research Imaging Centre (CUBRIC), Wales Research and Diagnostic Positron Emission Tomography Imaging Centre (PETIC), Wales Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience (WICN), the UnumProvident Centre for Psychosocial and Disability Research, the Cardiff Cognitive Neuroscience Seminar Series, School of Psychology MindArt project, the Haydn Ellis Distinguished Lecture Series and Cardiff's University Research Institutes.
4. From 2010-2014, I was Chair and Academic lead of the Welsh Crucible, the all-Wales staff leadership programme for early career researchers. This flagship researcher development programme, showcased at the European Commission in Brussels, won the Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development in 2013.
5. I acted as Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales from March 2018 to February 2022. The role involved providing scientific advice to the First Minister, his Cabinet, and the wider Welsh Government.

### **Role of Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales**

6. The role of the Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales (CSAW) was established by the First Minister in May 2010 to provide scientific advice to the First Minister, the Cabinet, and the wider Welsh Government. The CSAW role was designed to be cross cutting but was not seen as a specialist or lead science adviser addressing policy areas with existing science advisers covering human and animal health such as the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) & Chief Scientific Adviser for Health (CSAH) and Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). The roles of Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Chief Scientific Adviser for Health (CSAH) are long established posts (1969 and 1988 respectively) and retain the responsibility for providing medical and public health policy advice to the Health and Social Care Minister.
7. As a relatively recent addition to the range of existing evidence advisers covering Welsh Government policy responsibilities there are no formal reporting lines between the CSAH and CSAW. The relationship is informal with no joint government governance structures.

## **Responsibilities and focus of the CSAW role**

8. The responsibilities and focus of the CSAW role involve:
  - a. Promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects.
  - b. Championing science across Government and relevant stakeholders.
  - c. Reviewing scientific advice provided to the Welsh Government save for those policy areas with pre-existing Chief Science Advisers (e.g., Human and Animal Health).
  - d. Engaging with the wider scientific community.
  - e. Managing the large Welsh Government funded Ser Cymru Programmes.
  - f. Working with the Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and departmental Chief Scientific Advisers in the UK government.
  - g. Acting as Head of Profession for science and technology staff in Wales and particularly in the Welsh Government.
  - h. Promoting Wales's intellectual, innovative, and cultural achievements nationally and internationally for economic and social well-being.
  - i. Encouraging greater diversity in STEM and helping to build a strong and dynamic science base in support of Wales' economy and national development.
  - j. Representing the Welsh Government internationally on science and technology issues.
9. The principle focus of the CSAW role since it began in 2010 lay in supporting the growth of the Welsh economy, growing research capacity, delivering more and better skilled jobs, presenting Wales as a place where science, research to high standards and innovation are done well, and creating an environment to help young people to take up opportunities.

This included consideration of Wales' future skills needs, taking a proactive approach to encouraging and increasing the interest in STEMM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine).

10. When I joined Welsh Government in March 2018, the office of the CSA was located within the Economy and Transport Ministerial portfolio. In December 2018, the office was moved to the Minister for Education and finally in May 2021, the office reverted to the Economy Minister portfolio, where it currently remains.
11. Holding a cross-cutting role (but not being a policy lead or budget holder), I set out plans (agreed by Cabinet in 2018) after I came into post to restructure and refocus the CSA division covering 5 broad areas:
  - a. Science Advice for Government Policy
  - b. Science Promotion & Communications
  - c. Management of Ser Cymru Research Programme
  - d. Growing Science Capability & Skills Evidence Synthesis & Analytics
  - e. Developing Future Research opportunities
12. I also changed the existing Science Advisory Council for Wales into a smaller, high profile independent Wales Science and Innovation Advisory Council (WSIAC) comprising distinguished members of the UK Science, Business and Innovation community. Although the council has no statutory or financial responsibilities, WSIAS provided me as CSAW with independent advice on science, business, and innovation developments.

### **Key developments as CSAW**

13. The key developments that arose during my time as CSAW, specifically between 2018 and 2021, were:
  - a. Rebranding the CSA division as the Welsh Government Office for Science (WGOS).

- b. As Chief Scientific Advisor, my role included monitoring and engaging with policy initiatives and delivery strategies being developed by UK Government, so that the Welsh Government was prepared. These engagements helped inform policy and strategy development in Wales and maximise advantage for Wales. In this role, I co-ordinated cross government Welsh Government policy responses to several UK and Welsh R&D wide reviews and initiatives including:
- i. Grant Review of UKRI Independent review of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) **[Exhibit PH01 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187600]**.
  - ii. Nurse Review of the research landscape **[Exhibit PH02 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187602]**.
  - iii. Research Bureaucracy Review **[Exhibit PH03 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187599]**.
  - iv. REF Review<sup>1</sup>.
  - v. UK Innovation Strategy. **[Exhibit PH04 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187606]**.
  - vi. Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) **[Exhibit PH05 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187595]**.
  - vii. Levelling Up White Paper **[Exhibit PH06 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187598]**.
  - viii. Welsh Government Innovation Strategy **[Exhibit PH07 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187601]**.
  - ix. Welsh Government Research and Innovation priorities **[Exhibit PH08 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187593]**.
  - x. HEFCW research and innovation strategy, currently being revised **[Exhibit PH109 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187605]**.

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<sup>1</sup> Times Higher Education Article “REF review ‘will focus on diverse outputs and research culture’” published October 26, 2020 by Jack Grove.

- xi. Global Centre for Rail Excellence **[Exhibit PH10 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187597]**
  - xii. UKRI Research Infrastructure Review **[Exhibit PH11 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187609].**
  - xiii. Highlight to relevant UK Government departments, the potential in Wales for a National Thermal Hydraulic Facility and Advanced Radioisotopes Technology for Health Utility Reactor (ARTHUR) **[Exhibit PH12 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187610].**
- c. Science Diplomacy: Welsh Government representative engaging with UKRI, BEIS, National academies, and international bodies such as European Science Advisors Forum (ESAF), Science Advice for Policy by European Academies (SAPAE) & International Network for Government Science Advisers (INGSA).
  - d. Given multiple Ministerial oversight of the Welsh R&I policy and budget areas and absence of an overarching guiding R&D strategy, I established and chaired the Research Innovation Strategic Engagement (RISE) group of officials in 2018 to help create greater awareness and policy coherence for R&D policy and delivery issues across the Welsh Government. These monthly meetings provided a much-needed opportunity to me to facilitate the exchange of information, co-ordinate intelligence and offer a one stop shop for contributions from relevant UK departments (e.g., UKRI, BEIS) to present to the R&I community.
  - e. As part of the Welsh Government's response to the REID review (2018), I secured funding to establish a new Welsh Research and Innovation London Office (WRILO) as part of the wider Victoria St, London office expansion with the aim of increasing Wales' profile in the UK capital; pursuing funding opportunities (university, business and research institutes); draw in talent and investment and represent the Welsh Government.
  - f. As CSAW I commissioned and contributed the following publications:
    - i. The high level Welsh Government policy paper Wales: protecting research and innovation after EU exit, outlining the important role that EU Structural Funds played in helping to grow the volume, quality and international impact of its

research base over the past 18 years and the comparative impressive success of the Welsh research. The report also highlighted how withdrawal from the EU was likely to impact significantly upon all aspects of Welsh research and innovation activity **[Exhibit PH13 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187608]**.

- ii. A report on the range of STEM based programmes taking place in Wales, the gender performance of pupils across different ages, and those weaknesses where interventions could be prioritised for actions of the Women in STEM Board. The final report provided for a series on pragmatic recommendations for Ministerial considerations. **[Exhibit PH14 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187596]**.
- iii. A series of public facing reports that mapped the performance of the research and innovation ecosystem in Wales, and benchmarking this against UK national strengths.
- iv. The first representative population studies in Wales that assessed the awareness, understanding and attitudes towards science and research amongst the general public in Wales. **[Exhibit PH15 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187594]**.
- v. The Welsh Public Attitudes to Science survey (2020) captured for the first time Welsh public perceptions regarding the value of science and scientific advice just prior to Covid onset. It was subsequently arranged for this to be repeated in 2021 **[Exhibit PH16 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187603 and Exhibit PH17 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187604]**.
- vi. Elsevier comparative metrics-based assessment of Wales's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) research performance from 2010 to 2019, which showed that the quality and productivity of Wales's SDG related research was impressive, particularly when considering what is produced from a small country with relatively limited resources **[Exhibit PH18 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187607]**.
- g. In preparation for the 2021 Comprehensive Spending Review, and growing questions from UKG officials, UKRI, Wales' stakeholders and Higher Education

Funding Council (HEFCW) about Welsh Government Research, Development, and Innovation strategic priorities, arranged for a series of cross department consultations to ensure that Wales could field a set of high-level R&D priorities to inform UK Government plans for the CSR. The FM and Cabinet subsequently agreed and published five high level Welsh Government priority areas for research, development, and innovation **[Exhibit PH08 M1HALLIGAN01 – INQ000187593]**.

## **UK CSA and Welsh CSA**

14. The UK GCSA provides scientific advice to the Prime Minister and members of cabinet and advises the government on all aspects of policy on science and technology. Most UK government departments employ their own Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA), and the UK GCSA works informally with these department CSAs on cross-cutting issues. Departmental CSAs are recruited based on their skills and credibility in their field.
15. The UK GCSA has no formal management responsibility for departmental or Devolved Government CSAs but is free to provide advice to all departments. Departmental CSAs are the main contact point between the suppliers of science advice, either external, mandated, or internal structures, and policy makers. Their remit can include, as in the case of Health or DEFRA, taking a key lead role in public health or animal health emergencies.
16. Since 2017, the UK GCSA has chaired weekly Chief Scientific Advisers Network, a group of UK departmental CSAs together with CSAs from the devolved Governments, to discuss key UK-wide issues, share updates and support the GCSA. The GCSA has no formal relationship with the devolved governments, but can advise, where appropriate, on reserved matters.

## **CSAW and Health Advice to Welsh Government during Covid 19**

17. As a devolved area of responsibility for Welsh Government, all policy decisions relating to health in Wales including medical emergencies, such as the pandemic are made by Welsh Ministers advised by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and Chief Scientific Advisor for



Health (CSAH), together with the CEO of NHS Wales. This is like animal health emergencies where the Chief Veterinary Officer is the responsible lead official for advising and managing the containment of infectious disease relating to animal and livestock.

18. Consequently, as CSAW my role did not involve or require explicit involvement in the planning or preparation for pandemic preparedness or participation in the Wales Resilience Forum (WRF) and Civil Contingencies Group (CCG). As Wales CSA (2018-21), I had no formal governance or leadership role with respect to the policy preparation for pandemic readiness and or the management of epidemic outbreaks.
19. Throughout the course of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CMO and the Welsh Government benefited from health and science research experts convened by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) established and co-chaired by the CSAH and the Deputy Director for Technology and Digital. TAG provided the independent scientific and technical advice from across Welsh Government on Covid-19 to Ministers.
20. TAG was recognised within the Emergency Planning and Civil Contingency operating function of the Welsh Government as providing advice for policy makers. The responsibility and accountability for TAG sat with the Co-Chairs who in turn were managed by an Oversight Board comprising the Director General for Health & Social Services, the Director General for Covid Coordination and the Chief Medical Officer. The TAG Co-Chairs represented the Welsh Government at SAGE and attended the weekly UK Science Coordination Group, to ensure coordination with upcoming SAGE activity, and a bi-weekly 4 Nations Scientific Co-ordination Group, to consider more strategic scientific matters.
21. As CSAW, I supported the CSAH and CMO during Covid by providing nearly 30% of my non-programme Welsh Government Office for Science staff to support of the CSAH's Technical Advisory Group (TAG). I also attended the Covid-19 Technical Advisory Group. The exclusive ownership of key advisory role responsibilities relating to medical and public health government policy by those serving within the Welsh Government's health care organisation (e.g.: CMO, CSAH) was designed to ensure leadership transparency and the effective stewardship of relevant systems and resources.

## **Health Research Funding**

22. In Wales, Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) is the body responsible for health and social care research policy, strategy and funding. HCRW brings together a wide range of partners across the NHS local authorities, universities, and research institutions to promote research into diseases, treatments, services, and outcomes to improve and save lives. HCRW receives dedicated annual funding of £42M from the Welsh Government and is managed by a Director of Health and Care Research Wales who is accountable, via Research and Development Division and the Chief Medical Officer to the Minister for Health and Social Services

## **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that the proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed:

**Personal Data**

Dated: 10 May 2023