



University of Essex



Institute of Public Health and Wellbeing – Strategic Plan 2023- 2026

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Introduction

This document sets out the vision - priorities, objectives, and actions - and operational approach of the Institute of Public Health and Wellbeing (IPHW) for the period 2023-2026. This document serves as a reference point, guiding the short- and long-term strategy of IPHW. Importantly, while it outlines the IPHW *guiding principles*, it is designed to allow flexibility for adapting to changes in circumstances.

The distinctive strengths of the University of Essex align to the most urgent health challenges we are facing at local, national, and global levels. Over the past two years the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed vulnerabilities in our health systems across the globe, exacerbating health inequalities and exposing, once again, structural drivers of health inequalities.

The University of Essex, in collaboration with health sector partners, delivers world-leading, impactful research and innovation in public health and wellbeing, to meet the needs of the population. Our community of academics, together with key stakeholders, is committed to impact-focused prevention and promotion efforts. Driven by innovation, partnership, and a shared focus on actions, we strive for the betterment of health and wellbeing, and health equity.

The IPHW, established in 2022, represents a major strategic innovation for the University of Essex, bringing together our community of experts to provide pioneering leadership in the production of world-class research, knowledge exchange and impact. Working with regional, national, and international partners, the IPHW is driven by a collective goal of creating a healthier and fairer society.

IPHW is placed in the Knowledge Gateway: Parkside Phase 3a, a new 40,000 square feet building, a major investment for the University of Essex (at the time of writing the strategy the building is in its last phase of construction). IPHW shares the ground floor of the building (approx. 10,000 square



feet) with the Health and Wellbeing Care Hubs (see Appendix 1 for detailed information). The space is equipped with a state-of-the-art infrastructure which provides our community of researchers with access to high-quality resources and services needed to foster innovation and develop cutting-edge research with real-world impact.

Strategic vision and mission

This section describes the strategic vision of the IPHW which will form the basis for developing the IPHW in the short-, medium-, and longer-term. The IPHW Vision and Mission are defined as follows:

Vision: Better health and wellbeing for all – locally, nationally, and globally

Mission: To produce, co-produce and deliver world-class, timely and robust scientific evidence to support decision-making processes, inform policies for promoting health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities locally, nationally, and globally.

To achieve its vision and mission the IPHW will increase the capacity and visibility of the University of Essex as a **world-leader in research** tackling the most urgent regional, national, and global health challenges. Further, the IPHW will enhance the development, dissemination, and translation of robust scientific evidence from the University research community to inform local, national, and global policies aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the population. To achieve this IPHW is fully committed to open science with researchers working collaboratively, sharing knowledge and experiences throughout the research cycle.

In addition to providing critical mass and intellectual leadership for the University’s research on public health and wellbeing, the IPHW supports Departments and Schools (see section *IPHW support functions* section for additional information) in strengthening their research capacity and quality, optimising preparations for the **Research Excellence Framework** (REF) across outputs, impact and environment, and maximising opportunities across our community of experts to enhance impact. IPHW will support the overall reputation and standing of the University by increasing its national and global excellence in research and education.

The IPHW contributes directly to the delivery of the University research mission, as presented in the action plan attached to this strategy, helping to achieve the research priorities set out in the Research Strategy (2019-2025), with a focus on **people, knowledge, and communities**.

The IPHW builds its reputation on research, knowledge exchange and impact, supports the



University's Education Strategy through CPD and skills training, and offers a transformational research environment by,

“asking difficult questions, challenging conventional wisdom, tackling with rigour the questions that matter for people and communities and putting ideas into action will benefit the individuals and communities”.

The IPHW is committed to community-based participatory research. It delivers on this commitment by improving researchers' understanding of community priorities, their significance, and the need for culturally sensitive communications and research methodologies, as well as by raising the community's awareness of the role of research in tackling major issues.

The IPHW is at the vanguard of maximising **impact-focused research and knowledge exchange**. The three Faculties – Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Science and Health, Faculty of Social Science – embed complementarities that can be leveraged to develop interdisciplinary clusters driving research innovation and transdisciplinary solutions for public health and wellbeing.

IPHW is joining other well-established Centres and Institutes of excellence – the Institute for Analytics and Data Sciences, the Human Rights Centre, and Institute for Social and Economic Research – which represent the forefront research in the field of data science, social and economic research and human rights. Collaboration between Centres and Institutes will strengthen the identification of synergistic priority areas of public health and wellbeing that are critical to support the IPHW mission and strategic vision of the University.

The IPHW community will be challenged to consider the impact component in each step of the process to ensure alignment between the research efforts and the IPHW mission. To make impact part of the IPHW ethos, we will embed, from the very beginning, a strong impact-driven focus aimed at influencing policies and practice to ensure that our work will have direct benefit to people and the communities they live in.



Strategic priorities to achieve

IPHW mission and vision

The strategic priorities set to achieve the IPHW vision and mission are in line with the priorities of the University Strategy and University Research Strategy 2019-2025 – People, Communities, Knowledge, and Innovation (Figure 1).

At the heart of our mission lies the formation of a **world-class team of researchers and practitioners in Public Health and Wellbeing (People)** comprising individuals with diverse expertise and experiences who will constitute the basis for a **global centre of excellence in Public Health and Wellbeing (Communities)** ensuring a **world-class multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research in Public Health and Wellbeing (Knowledge)**.

By leveraging the power of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary approaches, the IPHW seeks to generate innovative insights and evidence-based strategies that address real-world needs and priorities. Through the integration of people, community, and knowledge generation, the IPHW aspires to establish itself as a **centre of excellence for innovative and timely solutions addressing real world needs, problems, and priorities (Innovation)**, ultimately enhancing the reputation of the University.

The primary objective of the IPHW is to influence the future of public health through an ecosystem of academic and non-academic networks, all dedicated to enhancing the health and wellbeing of everyone. With its distinct position, the IPHW plays a pivotal role in shaping public health and wellbeing research, generating, and sharing research that encompasses real-life experiences, cutting-edge methodologies, and theoretical models designed to address the intricate aspects of human health. This approach enables transdisciplinary solutions necessary for the complex nature of human health and wellbeing.

Figure 1 – Strategic priorities to achieve IPHW mission and vision



People: world-class team of researchers and practitioners in Public Health and Wellbeing

People priority 1: inspire and empower research leadership in Public Health and Wellbeing and support the development of future leaders

We seek to recruit and grow a world-class team of academic staff, clinicians, and professional practitioners dedicated to advancing Public Health and Wellbeing. These individuals will bring together their collective knowledge, skills, and passion to drive transformative change in health and wellbeing outcomes on a local, national, and global scale.

We will inspire and empower research leadership in areas supporting Public Health and Wellbeing, while also nurturing the development of future leaders. To achieve this, we will focus on attracting world-class researchers at various stages of their careers. This will involve increasing funding for postdoctoral positions through partnerships and ad-hoc postdoctoral funding bids. Where possible, we will seek to include “pathway to permanency” agreements as part of post-doctoral packages, optimising stability and support for researchers transitioning into leadership roles. Moreover, we will actively seek funding opportunities to host IPHW visiting scholars, both through individual applications and collaborative schemes, fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration.

We will build a **vibrant community** of junior researchers that transcends disciplinary boundaries. To facilitate this, we will support the design of a Research Fellow Programme, which will bring together promising young researchers across the University from various disciplines. By providing them with a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, networking, and mentorship, we aim to nurture their

growth and enhance their research capabilities. We will work with the Dean of Postgraduate Research and Education and the Directors of the other flagship Institutes (IADS, ISER) and Centres (Human Rights Centre) to shape, design and launch the Research Fellow Programme which will benefit the entire community of Research Fellows across the University.

To ensure that IPHW Research Fellows contribute meaningfully to the research mission of the University, we will establish clear expectations for and responsibilities of IPHW Research Fellows, fostering a strong sense of collaboration and collective purpose. By aligning their research activities with the University's broader research goals, the IPHW Research Fellows will make significant contributions to advancing knowledge and understanding in the field of Public Health and Wellbeing and support the University research strategy 2019-2025.

We recognize the importance of further identifying and developing key areas of expertise in public health and wellbeing across the University. To achieve this, we will conduct a comprehensive mapping exercise to assess the academic expertise available within different departments and faculties by research topic. This mapping will enable us to refine our priority areas and **strategically align research efforts**, maximizing the impact of the IPHW initiative. By leveraging the diverse knowledge and skills across the University, we can address pressing public health challenges with a multidisciplinary and comprehensive approach.

We will support the development of a robust PhD program in Public Health and Wellbeing contributing to the current PhD programme hosted by the School of Health and Social Care ensuring that all students will benefit from the environment offered by the IPHW. We will also increase efforts to identify both internal and external funding sources, including seeking opportunities for international and multi-institutional collaborative PhD funding schemes in collaboration with the PGR Directors across the University. Registration, QA, and progress monitoring for all IPHW PhD students will be vested in the home Department/School.

Recognizing the importance of **fostering a growing community** of academic staff engaged in health and wellbeing-related research across the University, we are committed to supporting smooth transitions, professional development, and career progression/advancement for staff members across Schools and Departments. This involves providing the necessary support, mentorship, and training to enable staff to expand their research focus and actively contribute to the IPHW's objectives, and includes exploring the integration of ASE and ASER staff knowledge to design and deliver practice informed research.

Building an **international reputation** is a key aspect of the IPHW's mission. To achieve this,



we will actively engage with internationally-recognized experts in the field of public health and wellbeing. By establishing collaborations, inviting guest speakers, and organizing international conferences and symposia, we seek to create a global network of thought leaders and practitioners. Through these engagements, we will enhance the IPHW's visibility and reputation and foster knowledge exchange to advance the field of public health and wellbeing on a global scale.

Further, IPHW is committed to strengthening existing and building new **external partnerships**. Leveraging the University's membership of Eastern ARC, NIHR ARC East of England, the Young Universities for the Future of Europe Alliance (YUFE) and the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) will catalyse regional, national, and international communities of researchers in the field of public health and wellbeing. Activities include co-hosting workshops/seminars, shared research fellows, bid preparation, contributing to advisory groups/boards.

People Priority 2: Create an environment that fosters innovation in research and world-leading impactful research that tackle the major local, national, and global challenges in Public Health and Wellbeing.

We will establish an environment that nurtures research innovation and fosters world-leading impactful research initiatives, specifically addressing the critical local, national, and global challenges in the realm of Public Health and Wellbeing. This priority underscores the importance of creating a conducive atmosphere for groundbreaking research, enabling scientists and scholars to tackle the most pressing issues and contribute towards transformative advancements in the field.

In line with our commitment to innovation, we continuously identify emerging research areas that have the potential to form the foundation of future Centres/Hubs. By keeping our **real-world approach** we ensure that our research efforts remain relevant, timely, and impactful. These identified areas serve as opportunities for focused research and collaboration, leading to the establishment of new Centres/Hubs that will contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the development of innovative solutions. We will identify funding supporting the establishment of centres of excellence and work with our community of experts to secure the funding. In addition, we are committed to support the development of Centres/Hubs that align with the wider University and IPHW priorities. One example of this support is the development and launch of the Centre for Coastal Communities, which aims at investigating and addressing the unique health challenges faced by communities residing in coastal areas.

We will support the launch of Health and Wellbeing Care Hubs (see Appendix 1 for detailed information). These hubs, led and managed by the Dean of Integrated Health and Care Partnerships, serve as collaborative platforms where researchers, practitioners, and community stakeholders come together to work on innovative solutions for specific health and wellbeing

challenges. We will work with the Dean of Integrated Health and Care Partnerships to ensure integration between the Health and Wellbeing Care Hubs and IPHW priorities.

Through these initiatives, we aim to create an environment that fosters innovation, supports interdisciplinary collaborations, and facilitates groundbreaking research. By focusing on the major challenges in Public Health and Wellbeing, we will strengthen our position as a leader in **addressing pressing health issues**, both locally, nationally, and globally.

Our community of researchers will benefit from the IPHW infrastructure, its shared space with the Health and Wellbeing Care Hubs, and the proximity with the new University GP practice. This presents distinctive opportunities for our community where, in addition to a cutting-edge infrastructure, they will coexist in a physical space with clinical and non-clinical practitioners, academics, students, and stakeholders spanning diverse disciplines, all dedicated to enhancing the health and wellbeing of the population.

The proximity with the GP practice will allow the IPHW community to enhance real-world research



within a unique community (University of Essex students) with the possibility to improve the mental and physical health of our students and use that information to expand beyond our Institution. This also provides a unique opportunity to increase collaborative research between clinician (GPs) and academics.

People Priority 3: Inspirational leadership and teamwork

We will develop opportunities aimed at training cohorts of **emerging leaders in public health** and wellbeing to establish a long-term network of experts who collaborate and research major public health and wellbeing challenges. To do so we aim at working in partnership with local (and in the future national) stakeholders to ensure that multiple stakeholders can benefit from IPHW community, knowledge and innovation.

Community: global centre of excellence in Public Health and Wellbeing

Communities Priority 1: Cutting edge centre as a physical and virtual hub for world-class research.

IPHW will be a cutting-edge centre as both a physical and virtual hub for world-class research in Public Health and Wellbeing. This priority aims to enhance the University's reputation and excellence in this field while fostering **international partnerships**.

To achieve these, we will identify critical roles across international organizations. This includes seeking opportunities for our researchers to contribute to boards, expert groups, and other influential positions. By actively participating in these international platforms, we can shape global health policies and initiatives, while also raising the profile of our University.

Furthermore, we will increase the number of academics involved in global consortia, particularly in initiatives such as the Global Burden of Disease and NCD Risk Factors Collaboration. By participating in these collaborative efforts, our researchers can contribute with their expertise and collaborate with leading experts from around the world. This will not only advance our understanding of global health challenges but also enhance our contributions to evidence-based interventions and policy recommendations, while increasing University citations (KPI 9).

We recognize the importance of **cross institutional collaborations** in higher education. Through strategic partnerships and collaborations with academic institutions worldwide, we will foster knowledge exchange, joint research projects, and collaborative bid submissions. By working together with other universities, we can leverage diverse perspectives, resources, and expertise to address complex public health challenges more effectively. By strengthening these collaborations, we can leverage collective strengths and resources to tackle pressing global health issues and contribute to the advancement of Public Health and Wellbeing on a global scale. Through these efforts, we will establish the IPHW as a premier hub for world-class research and collaboration in Public Health and Wellbeing. By increasing



our international partnerships, engaging in influential roles, and fostering cross-institutional collaborations, we can expand our impact, further our reputation, and contribute to improving health outcomes globally.

Communities Priority 2: Research clusters and collaborative partnerships.

The IPHW focuses on the establishment of **research clusters** and collaborative partnerships to enhance research efforts in addressing priority public health and wellbeing challenges. To achieve this, we will actively engage with stakeholders and foster collaborations that drive impactful research outcomes. This involves identifying key thematic areas that align with the priority challenges and securing funding to support research endeavours. By creating research clusters and forming **collaborative partnerships**, we can leverage collective expertise, resources, and knowledge to generate innovative solutions and contribute to the improvement of public health and wellbeing.

Communities Priority 3: Living labs: co-creation, development, and scaling-up research

We will support the establishment of **living labs** as spaces for co-creation, development, and scaling-up of research. To achieve this, we prioritize increasing the University's capacity for co-producing research and fostering citizen science supported by the world-leading research in co-production and co-designed already occurring in the University. This involves creating opportunities for collaborative research between researchers and the wider community, allowing for the active involvement of citizens in the research process. By **embracing co-production** and citizen science, we can harness the collective wisdom, experiences, and perspectives of diverse stakeholders, leading to more relevant and impactful research outcomes in the field of Public Health and Wellbeing. We will work closely with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and relevant Ethics committee to ensure that research designed as part of this priority will meet the standards of research integrity, governance, and good practice in line with the principles set out in the 2019 Concordat to Support Research Integrity and the recommendations of the University of Essex Research Integrity Annual Report.

Knowledge: world-class multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary research in Public Health and Wellbeing

Knowledge Priority 1: Identify needs and priorities stemming out from partnerships with stakeholders.

We will aim at increasing quantity and quality of partnerships at regional, national, and international levels. We will map our existing partnerships, identify areas of strength and potential growth. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of our current collaborations, we can strategically expand and diversify our network.

In addition, we are committed to ensuring that a larger proportion of the academic community can access partnership opportunities. This involves working closely with our Research and Enterprise Office (REO) colleagues to provide wider access to partnership initiatives. By promoting inclusivity and fostering a **culture of collaboration**, we can facilitate meaningful connections and enable more researchers to engage in impactful research that drives innovation and knowledge exchange. Doing so we will also support the University Strategy to transformational innovation and enterprise aimed at supporting social, commercial and cultural entrepreneurship, through the engagement with local, regional, and global communities, to share facilities and to collaborate on programmes of innovation and enterprise that benefit people and communities, globally, nationally and regionally.



To strengthen the University's capacity to attract impactful commissioned work, we will focus to support and enhance our current University research service unit. One of our key strategies involves revising the existing evaluation service units to develop a comprehensive and integrated research service that spans across the institution. This initiative aims to increase the scope of **interdisciplinary evaluation research** that we offer, allowing us to provide a more holistic and comprehensive approach to addressing the needs and requirements of commissioned work. By improving our capacity in this manner, we aim to enhance our competitiveness and attract more commissioned projects that contribute to the advancement of knowledge and result in significant societal impacts.

Knowledge Priority 2: High quality and creative research and innovation.

We will identify funding opportunities and enhance the capacity to lead on research proposals, **supporting/mentoring junior colleagues** in their transition to research leadership roles. We will create a diverse portfolio of externally funded projects, encompassing both UKRI, non-UKRI, EU/Horizon Europe funding sources. To achieve this, we take the lead in establishing collaborations between the IPHW and external partners from academia, public sectors, and private sectors.

Working in collaboration with the REO, we will curate these partnerships to enhance our research capabilities and secure external funding. Additionally, we prioritize the long-term contribution of IPHW by identifying relevant funding opportunities that can provide ongoing support for our initiatives. Sustainability within the IPHW domain is defined as a *core-plus model*. The core element comprises the Director, Deputy Director, and Executive Officer and Institute Administrator, along with three IPHW research fellows consistently in place, with all roles centrally funded. The *plus* component encompasses any supplementary positions (e.g., research assistants, research fellows, project managers, etc.) aimed at enabling the Institute's growth and impact, which will be supported by external funding or a mix of both external and central funding.

We will actively work to position the IPHW at **regional, national, and global levels**. To achieve this, we actively organize and participate in relevant conferences and events that allow our community of researchers to showcase our research and expertise. By engaging with the wider academic and professional communities, we will enhance our visibility and reputation in the field of public health and wellbeing. This strategic positioning enables us to foster collaborations, share knowledge, and contribute to the broader discourse surrounding public health on a regional, national, and global scale.

A crucial aspect of the IPHW work will be in supporting the publication of **high-quality open access research outputs**, specifically targeting 3-star and 4-star publications. We emphasize writing and providing support for research outcomes that can be published in high-impact journals. By focusing on quality open access publications, we ensure that our research reaches a wide audience and has a significant influence within the academic and scientific communities. This commitment to excellence in publishing will reinforce our reputation as a centre of excellence in public health and wellbeing research.



To strengthen the IPHW's profile and impact we will engage in **knowledge exchange** and collaboration with external stakeholders. By actively seeking opportunities to share our expertise and research findings with relevant communities, we will enhance the dissemination and utilization of our research. This will include engaging in partnerships with policymakers, practitioners, and

other stakeholders who can directly benefit from our research outcomes. Through these collaborations, we aim to bridge the gap between research and practice, translating our findings into actionable solutions and policies that address real-world public health challenges. To achieve this, we will organise events and explore shared opportunities to ensure translation of efforts in publications, funding, and impact.

To ensure the continued contribution and growth of the IPHW, we will also prioritize building and maintaining relationships with **key stakeholders** within and outside the University. This involves fostering partnerships with funding bodies, industry leaders, governmental agencies, and other organizations that share our mission and vision. These collaborations not only contribute to our research portfolio but also create opportunities for knowledge exchange, resource sharing, and mutual support, further strengthening the IPHW's position as a leading institute in public health and wellbeing research and practice.

Knowledge Priority 3: Multi and interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation of ideas.

To enhance the institutional research capacity and opportunities in the areas of Public Health and Wellbeing, we undertake several strategic initiatives. We will foster collaboration and coordination across faculties, schools, and departments within the University. Working closely with different academic units and the Dean of Integrated Health and Care partnership, we will strategize the impact and research outcomes, promoting **cross-disciplinary approaches** to public health and wellbeing. Such collaborations will enable IPHW and the University to leverage diverse expertise and perspectives, leading to more comprehensive and impactful research outcomes.

IPHW engages closely with Schools/Departments to ensure mutual benefits. While the level of engagement varies depending on the needs, priorities, and research strategy of Schools/Departments, the IPHW aims to be a strategic partner supporting:

- Research Fellow positions working between the Institute and Department/School to enhance research capacity and global reputation (KPI2), REF (KPI8), citations (KPI9), and income generation (KPI10);
- Bid preparation on shared strategic projects (as Lead, co-lead, or collaborator);
- Bespoke seminars/workshops to enhance the links between our community of researchers on topics and areas of priority;
- Secondment opportunities to allow researchers across schools/departments to join the IPHW to work on specific projects (e.g. bid writing, paper preparation, conference organisations).

We will provide support for the strategic planning of the **Research Excellence Framework 2028**, with a specific focus on Units of Assessment 2 (UoA2) – Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care - and UoA3 – Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy, and any other UoAs related to health and wellbeing.

Additionally, we will support the development of associated impact case studies, showcasing the tangible outcomes of our research in addressing public health and wellbeing challenges. By highlighting the real-world impact of our work, we demonstrate the relevance and significance of our research to stakeholders and funders.

Furthermore, we will extend our support to individual schools and departments, assisting them in enhancing their interdisciplinary research profiles. To achieve this, we will work with DoR across schools/departments to identify specific needs. By facilitating **interdisciplinary collaborations**, we encourage the integration of different fields and methodologies, promoting a holistic and multifaceted approach to public health and wellbeing research. Through these efforts, we strengthen the research capacity of the institution and create opportunities for innovative and impactful research endeavours in the field of Public Health and Wellbeing.



Innovation: centre of excellence for innovative and timely solutions addressing real world needs, problems, and priorities

Innovation Priority 1: Innovative research culture rooted in creativity, quality and interdisciplinary teamwork.

To bolster the University's capacity for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) in Public Health and Wellbeing, we will prioritize strengthening collaborations with the private sector. With the support of REO, we will actively seek out and identify funding opportunities to support businesses and private sector organizations. By securing KTP funding, we can facilitate the transfer of knowledge and expertise from the University to **industry partners**, fostering innovation in public health and wellbeing outside of the traditional academic remit.

We will work with the University REO and Philanthropy teams to identify private funding sources for the development of new centres or units. By establishing strategic partnerships with private entities, we aim to attract financial support that can further enhance University capabilities and expand the scope of our work. These collaborations not only bring resources but also provide opportunities for joint initiatives that bridge academia and the private sector in addressing public health issues.

Innovation Priority 2: Accelerate KE by providing timely data and insights.

IPHW will focus on accelerating **Knowledge Exchange** (KE) by providing timely data and insights. To achieve this, we aim to position Essex as a renowned international hub in population health data. This involves strategic efforts to establish a population health data hub or consortium. By bringing together relevant stakeholders, including academia, industry, and government entities, we aim at creating a collaborative platform for data sharing, analysis, and research. This initiative aims to enhance the availability and accessibility of **population health data**, enabling researchers and policymakers to make informed decisions and drive meaningful change.



Additionally, we will prioritize increasing our participation in major data consortia. By actively engaging with established consortia that specialize in population health data, we can leverage their resources, expertise, and networks. Such collaboration allows us to access a broader range of data sources and expertise, accelerating our ability to generate valuable insights

and knowledge. By positioning Essex as a key player in these consortia, we contribute to the advancement of population health research on a global scale, strengthening our reputation and impact in the field.

Innovation Priority 3: Empower researchers, public and private sector, and communities.

To ensure the mission and vision of IPHW is achieved we will work towards **empowering** researchers, the public and private sectors, and communities. One of the key objectives is to increase the impact of research, specifically to support health- and wellbeing-focused REF Impact Case Studies, and also to support knowledge exchange and research impact more widely. To achieve this, we collaborate closely with the Research and Enterprise Office (REO) and the impact team to strategically align research activities with potential research impact. By identifying areas where our research can **make a meaningful difference**, we can prioritize and amplify its impact.

Additionally, we will work to engage our community of researchers with decision-makers to ensure that our research findings and recommendations are considered in policy-making processes. By providing evidence-based insights and contributing to guidelines and frameworks, we can strengthen the influence of our research on key political decisions related to public health and wellbeing.

IPHW support functions

The IPHW support functions across the University (academics, departments/schools, faculties) include a series of relevant activities specific to research, impact, outreach, and innovation (within the remit of the IPHW focus). Specifically, IPHW will provide support to:

- Create new and enhance existing **synergies** between-academics (individuals, research clusters, institutes/centres, departments/schools), facilitating inter- and trans-disciplinary research
- Develop research proposals both **reactively** (responding to specific requests from academics) and **proactively** (identifying relevant expertise across the University to respond to targeted external funding calls and leading the effort)
- Facilitate connections and build **networks** with external academic and non-academic partners, regionally, nationally and globally
- Work closely with schools/departments to support the research development of early career colleagues by providing opportunities for integration into research teams and **mentoring** by more senior staff
- Work closely with the impact team and colleagues to support a strategic approach to generating knowledge exchange and **impact**
- Enhance the **visibility** of projects and events where topics fall within the remit of the institute
- In consultation with academics across the University, support the development of novel public health-oriented **degree programmes** and identify opportunities for programme trainees to integrate into IPHW-based research projects
- Inform relevant interested boards and groups across the University of the advancement of the institute and support as needed



Research challenges and IPHW priorities

The **four key pillars** of the IPHW foundations build on the strengths of our University to deliver research, innovation and impact across:

- **Social, biological and environmental determinants of health,**
- **Interventions, outcomes, evaluations and policy,**
- **Conditions, individual differences, wellbeing, subjectivity and health promotion,**
- **Human Rights, Community participation and voice**

In addition, two cross cutting themes shape the IPHW approach:

- **Inequalities and their impacts on health and wellbeing;** and
- **Novel Data Science,** quantitative and qualitative Research Methodologies and Artificial Intelligence techniques for improving health and wellbeing (see **Figure 1**).

Within this overarching structure, the IPHW will retain the flexibility to respond quickly to emerging and priority challenges through engagement with major stakeholders and key national and international funders. This approach is oriented to generating **evidence-based research** that can be used directly by stakeholders to inform actions/interventions, policies, and decision-making processes with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of the population.

Figure 2 - IPHW conceptual framework



The initial focus of IPHW will target research at the intersection of:

- the areas of expertise of the community of researchers across the University
- the priority areas of key national and international funders (e.g. UKRI, NIHR, ERC, Gates Foundation, EU/Horizon Europe)
- the local, national, and global health challenges with the aim of maximising interdisciplinary research and developing transdisciplinary solutions for enhancing institutional success, evidenced by external research funding, quality of publications, maximisation of impact, and research-led teaching.

Two initial streams have been identified which simultaneously convey the breadth and depth of this University expertise, and align with the most urgent local, national, and global public health challenges:

▪ **Health and Wellbeing across the lifespan and life course**

This workstream focuses on how physical and mental health and wellbeing evolve throughout the various stages of life, focusing on the factors that influence the ultimate health and wellbeing outcomes of individuals. Understanding the role of modifiable factors and the impact of the broader determinants of health is of paramount importance to reduce health inequalities and to increase life expectancy free from ill-health. Further, this will serve as a resource for regional, national, and international decision-makers and policy developers. This will serve as a catalyst for integrating ongoing research efforts within our University's diverse community of researchers to advance the knowledge of health and wellbeing across different life stages, fostering connections and facilitate the continuous advancement of our collective understanding of health and wellbeing, from birth to death.

▪ **Health and Wellbeing from cells to society**

This workstream focuses on leveraging University expertise for articulating the spectrum of micro-level to macro-level influences shaping health and wellbeing, as well as to advance our understanding of the ways in which diverse research disciplines can collaborate to inform effective strategies for improving both individual and population-level health and wellbeing. This will serve as a catalyst for connecting our community of researchers, spanning a wide spectrum of fields, ranging from life sciences to human rights and policy studies. By doing so, we aim to create a dynamic platform for integrating translational and implementation research, effectively connecting the two ends of the spectrum.

The two streams provide a strategic focus for world leading research, knowledge exchange, and impact with the Health Wellbeing and Care Hubs to ensure the integration of research into clinical practice. The Health Wellbeing and Care Hub supports the University's ambition to develop specialist research, implement workforce development opportunities and provide a range of services focussed on evidenced based treatments/clinics.

To achieve the IPHW mission and ensure research conducted within the Institute aims to address health inequalities, IPHW brings together research focusing on the most urgent health outcomes with the analysis and understanding of the impact of the **wider determinants of health** (see Figure 2). To achieve its mission IPHW works closely with ISER, Human Rights Centre, and departments/schools with cutting edge theoretical and applied research in the field (e.g. Sociology, Law) to ensure that both the complexity of the problems focus of the IPHW research and the advancement in the field are reflected in the research outputs and its impact.

Guiding principles

The IPHW is based on a set of guiding values and beliefs which together underpin the IPHW's intellectual and operating culture.

| | |
|---|--|
| Transparency: | The IPHW aims for transparency both internally and externally. |
| Excellence: | The IPHW conducts rigorous, high-quality research driving evidence-based and data-driven decision-making for research, practice, and policy. |
| Collaboration: | The IPHW community fosters a collaborative environment to maximise transdisciplinary research and impact. |
| Learning: | The IPHW is a community of life-long learners that values and benefits from the unique skills and talents of its community. |
| Ambition: | The IPHW encourages its internal and external community to safely challenge conventions and find solutions to tough problems respecting and supporting its community throughout the risk-taking process. |
| Courage: | The IPHW is committed to act with courage to generate impactful interventions and find lasting solutions to difficult real world problems. |
| Inclusivity, diversity and equity: | The IPHW defends the principles of inclusivity, diversity and equity in the research conducted across its community. |



IPHW stakeholders and partnerships

The IPHW's external stakeholders are individuals, groups and organisations that are impacted by the work of the Institute, and who have an interest in the outputs and successes of the IPHW.

Stakeholder engagement at a strategic level is key to successfully achieving the IPHW vision and mission. The IPHW will collaborate, communicate, and/or co-produce research with its external stakeholders to enable **community engagement and knowledge exchange**, ultimately ensuring real world impact.

The IPHW serves to strengthening existing and build new **external partnerships**. These include well-established working relations with regional organisations (including, but not limited, Suffolk and North East Essex ICS, Mid and South Essex ICS, East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust, Essex County Council, Colchester City Council, Provide) which are strategic to ensure IPHW research is aligned to the health needs of the population and increase impact. In addition, existing relationships with regional (e.g. University of Kent, East Anglia University, Anglia Ruskin University, Universities of Bedfordshire, Cambridge, University of Hertfordshire), national (e.g. Imperial College London, UCL, London School of Hygiene and tropical Medicine), and international (e.g. Pennsylvania State University, University of Victoria, University of Gothenburg, Flinders University, Harvard University) Universities establish the foundations for enhancing academic partnerships, increasing grant capacity, accessing research funding, and strengthening the global reputation both of the IPHW and the University of Essex. Strong established (e.g., YuLife) and new partnerships with private sector organisations allows for innovation and knowledge transfer. Finally, international partnership with NGOs and, in general, third sector organisations (e.g. World Heart Federation, Lepra) allows to further target income generation and international impact.



The IPHW continually fosters new **internal and external synergies** that will lead to the development of new partnerships with a diverse pool of local, national, and international partners from a variety of stakeholder groups (e.g., public sector, private sector, NGOs, academia).

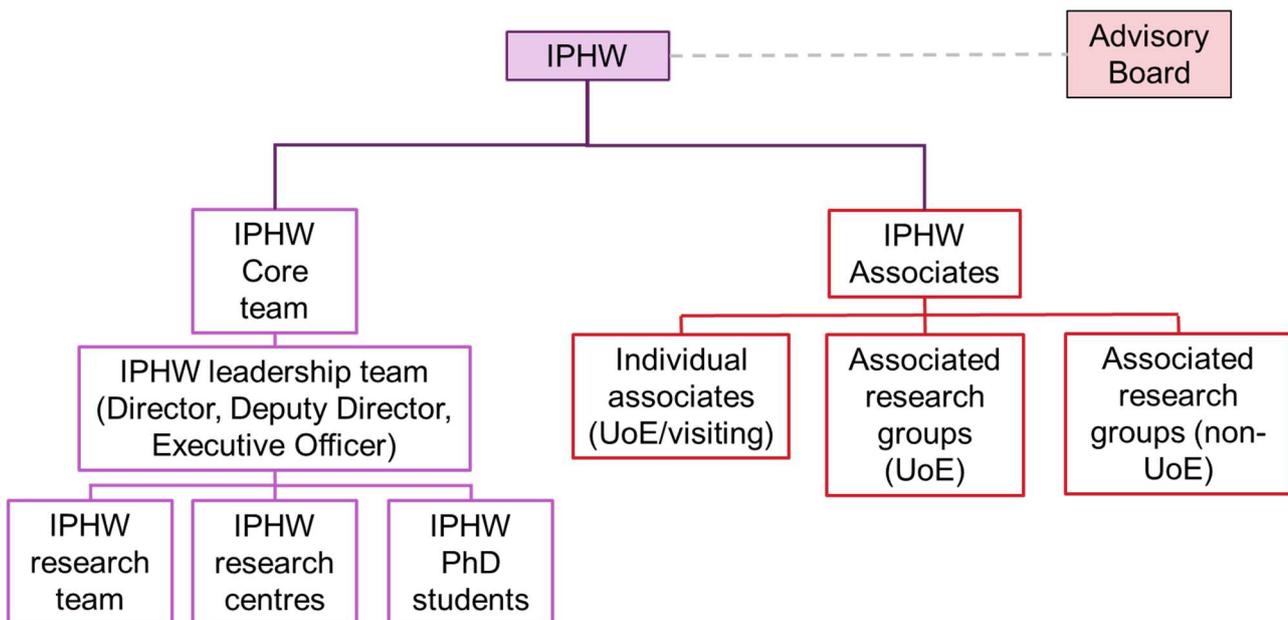
Organisation and Governance

The IPHW has been created in accordance with Ordinance 25 and performance will be reported to the USG annually via Research Committee. IPHW organisation and governance will ensure that both the activities and impacts of the research carried out as part of the IPHW aligns with and supports the Institute's vision and mission. This governance structure will ensure effective decision-making and oversight, facilitating the successful execution of the IPHW's vision and mission.

IPHW People

The IPHW comprises a **core team** (of individuals and centres), plus **associated individuals and associated groups** whose research mutually supports and benefits both the IPHW and their host organisations (**Figure 3**). The Director is line managed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Figure 3 - IPHW organisation and governance



The IPHW core team comprises the following:

- a) **IPHW leadership team** - Director, Deputy Director, Executive Officer and Institute Administrator (core funded).
 - **Director** – provides strategic leadership; acts as advocate for the IPHW; coordinates all internal activity and units working in the IPHW remit; works with academics across disciplines and external partners to generate significant new streams of research funding; provides research leadership and supervision to

generate world-class research; develops and implement the marketing strategy with Communications and External Relations Section; ensures the activities of the IPHW benefit the University and its research mission; identifies and develops opportunities to increase regional, national, and international partnership (with a variety of stakeholders); line management responsibility for the staff members while in their role within IPHW with coordination with home Departments/Schools when staff are on P2P; line management responsibility for the Executive Officer and Institute Administrator.

- **Deputy Director** - supports the Director of the IPHW, to enhance research, knowledge exchange and impact; provides direction to the IPHW to deliver research with leadership in specific areas of expertise; supports partner and business engagement; works with external partners to deliver the strategy of the Institute; generates significant research impact and ensure the REF criteria across the IPHW outputs; will enhance the scholarly reputation of the IPHW; supports research staff in the pathway to permanency.
- **Executive Officer and Institute Administrator** - works with and supports the Institute Director, Deputy Director and other staff within the IPHW; Organises and coordinates internal activities; supports the communication and external facing activities; provides financial management for the IPHW; liaison with the University; provides general administration, planning and support.

b) **IPHW research team** (see Appendix 2 for additional details) - IPHW post-doctoral **Research Fellows** contribute to the development of specific research programmes based on their area of expertise and support the vision and mission of the IPHW and the wider University. The research fellows will also have a key role in enabling strategic partnerships. The research fellows will contribute to the delivery of the University KPIs specific to global reputation (KPI2), REF (KPI8), citations (KPI9), and income generation (KPI10). The research fellows will represent the IPHW in public events enhancing the IPHW and University visibility, taking over strategic roles within academic and non-academic boards and ensuring that the strategy of both the IPHW and University are achieved. Junior members of the research team will be scaffolded by senior members of IPHW and by the wider Research Fellow Programme which IPHW is committed to support as from the action plan (People Priority 1) ensuring that research fellows have all the resources needed to establish their research programme by the end of their three years. IPHW post-doctoral Research Fellows are a mix of core funded posts (three active post on a P2P at any point in time), joint- funded posts (externally funded posts matched with core funding on a P2P), fully externally funded posts on fixed-term contracts.

- c) **IPHW research centres** - these fall within the remit of the IPHW and benefit from the support of the IPHW in terms of research delivery, grant applications, administration, and will be able to contribute to shape the future of the IPHW. IPHW research centres will focus on specific **institutional strategic priorities**. The performance of centres within the IPHW will be reviewed annually and reported to the USG as part of the Institute performance review process. Council, Senate and USG will be the final decision makers for approval of new centres.
- d) **IPHW PhD students**¹ - to host, supervise and support PhD students with a broad public health and wellbeing remit. In addition, beneficiaries of the **IPHW PhD studentship** will benefit from working with IPHW half a day a week on a variety of projects aligned with the IPHW priorities. All PhD students will receive the support of the PhD supervisory team



(regardless of if members or not of IPHW), IPHW team, and PGR team. Registration, QA, and progress monitoring for all IPHW PhD students will be vested in the home Department/School and in line with the Principal Regulations for Research Degrees.

The IPHW associates comprise the following:

- a) **Individual research associates** - researchers (from outside the core IPHW team)

who identify themselves as conducting research **aligned with the mission and objectives** of the IPHW and express interest in affiliating with IPHW. They can support and collaborate on IPHW research and represent the IPHW (where appropriate and mutually agreed). They will derive benefit from an association with the IPHW, while the IPHW will benefit from the interdisciplinary and interdepartmental relationship diversifying the area of research expertise, strengthening links to Schools and Departments, and enhancing the IPHW capacity to respond to calls for funding, requiring bespoke interdisciplinary expertise, in a timely way. These research associates can come from across the University of Essex. The IPHW will also support visiting associates from other institutions/ organisations.

- b) **Associated research groups (UoE)** - these will retain the identity of the research group (e.g., HSC: Public Health and social policy, Physical and mental health and wellbeing across

¹ Within the timeframe of this strategy, the aspiration is for the IPHW to explore the possibility to host and supervise PhD students as well as develop a PhD programme

the lifespan; SRES: Health Exercises and Active Lifestyle; CSEE: Artificial Intelligence, Brain-Computer Interfaces and Neural Engineering; PPS: Centre for Trauma, Asylum and Refugees; LS: Medical Humanities) but an **affiliation with IPHW** will support integration across groups and limit duplication of efforts, while enabling collaboration and open communication on research and topics of common interest. They will come from across the University of Essex and IPHW will act as an additional platform to promote the work of the research groups. Associate research group will contribute to map “needs” and “assets” of the community to ensure the IPHW can provide the right support.



- c) **Associated research groups (non-UoE)** – External - national and international - research groups interested to **partner on specific themes** will be able to affiliate themselves with the IPHW. They will benefit from accessing the expertise of the IPHW community and they will contribute to enhance IPHW and University of Essex access to new international and non-domestic research funding opportunities, as well as visibility, recognition, and impact on an international level.

IPHW Advisory board

The IPHW Advisory Board represents the range of stakeholders involved in the IPHW and is responsible for **advising** the Director of IPHW at a strategic level on matters of:

- The strategic direction and priorities of the Institute
- The research agenda
- Funding opportunities
- Collaborations and partnerships
- Engagement with students
- Wider community projects
- Policy engagement
- Impact

The Advisory Board also has a role in communicating the Institute’s strategy and role to a wide audience via its members’ existing networks of contacts.

While the IPHW will take serious consideration of the views of the Advisory Board, this is an advisory board and as such does not have decision-making authority.

Membership

The Board will include University and external members, invited to cover the breadth of stakeholders relevant to the Institute. Members of the IPHW Advisory Board, including the Chair, shall be appointed to terms of two years. Fifty-percent of the members will be invited to renew their role for another two years to ensure continuity in the activity.

Members of the Board will include (but not be limited to):

- IPHW Director
- IPHW Deputy Director
- Dean of Partnerships (Research)
- Dean of Integrated Care and Health Partnership
- PVC Research
- Representatives from all three Faculties (Executive Dean/ Faculty Dean (Research) or their nominee)
- Directors of UoE institutes/centres - IADS, ISER, Human Rights Centre
- Representative from the Students' Union
- Representatives from external partners and the health hubs (to be identified by IPHW Director and Deputy Director)

In addition:

- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) will appoint the Chair of the Advisory board, who will serve a fixed term of two-years, renewable for a further two years also with the approval of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research). The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) will also sign off on the Advisory board.
- The Secretariat will be provided by the IPHW Executive Officer.

Mode of Operation

The Advisory Board will meet twice a year, with papers provided two weeks in advance of the meeting. The Chair and/or members may call extra meetings at the Chair's discretion. Reasonable expenses associated with membership of the Board (travel, subsistence, etc) will be paid by the IPHW for the two scheduled meetings. Costs and time associated with any additional discretionary meeting will not be covered by IPHW. The Advisory Board roles are not remunerated.

There will be standing papers at each meeting as follows:

- An update report which provides an overview of current IPHW activities and news, and future plans.
- A presentation on a key piece of substantive research being driven by the Institute, or a key collaboration/ partnership project.

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the Board annually and approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Definition of success

The IPHW will be an international **centre of excellence**, bringing together interdisciplinary research strengths to tackle critical public health and wellbeing challenges. Its success will be based on the functions identified within the document, specifically:

- Attracting funding, generating impact, bringing through the next generation of researchers, becoming a driver of policy and practice development, and regional, national, and international recognised/preferred research partner.
- Supporting research and innovations that align to regional priorities through close collaboration with sector partners. The Institute will be a focal point for research and development and for supporting, in first instance, health-related training programmes, enabling access to the expertise, skills and talents of the University's staff and students.
- Identifying areas for growing infrastructures for supporting sustainable, impact-focused activity (e.g., a team of professionals with expertise in programme evaluation who can be contracted by stakeholders and other interested parties to support the development implementation, and evaluation of diverse public health- and wellbeing-focused programmes).



Alignment between the strategy, its operationalisation and the University research strategy will set the criteria for the evaluation of the performance of the Institute which will be based on the Institute performance form and the action plan submitted with the strategy. While this process will be on an annual basis the Institute will consistently monitor progress towards those targets to ensure to put in place, if needed, mitigation plans.

The Director is line-managed by and accountable to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research). The Director and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) will meet regularly to ensure progress on and delivery of the strategic plan and any resource requests will be put through the University planning round.

Appendix 1: IPHW and the Health Wellbeing and Care Hubs (HWCHs)

The IPHW has a critical linking role with the Health Wellbeing and Care Hubs (HWCH), which will provide an exciting state of the art research facility in a **clinical setting**. The HWCH will transform health and social care and strengthen the University connection with community and sector partners, regionally and nationally.

The HWCH are led and managed by the Dean of Integrated Health and Care Partnerships, who is responsible for setting the Strategic Plan and line manage the Clinics Manager.

The overarching mission of the HWCHs is to tackle the most complex issues in public health and wellbeing from a clinical perspective. The aims of the HWCHs are to **support families and individuals** through public facing health and social care facilities, serving the community and filling gaps in services.

This is accomplished by:

- Supporting the development and education of a resilient health and wellbeing **workforce**, trained and equipped to address future health threats.
- Provide easy access for partners to benefit from the University's knowledge and expertise, skills and talent-base, enabling **partnerships** with health and care-related sectors.
- Generate high quality clinical **placements** for our students, who are the future health and care workforce.

The IPHW (Director and Deputy Director) and HWCHs (Dean of Integrated Health and Care Partnerships) will work closely together to ensure that activities within the HWCHs will result in world-leading outputs and that the HWCH can achieve impact beyond the regional remit and be recognised as an exemplar of excellence in research, teaching, and service at national and international level. In addition, the IPHW will support connectivity between the University community (research expertise) and the HWCHs.



Appendix 2 – Approach to Post-Doctoral Research Fellow

The IPHW research team is composed by a mix of i) pathway-to-permanency (P2P) core-funded (or co-funded) Post-Doctoral Research Fellows (IPHW Research Fellows), ii) fixed-term externally funded Post-Doctoral Research Fellows, and iii) fixed-term externally funded research assistants.

All IPHW Research Fellows are appointed on Grade 8 ASER contracts and transition to a Grade 9 ASER position, within a home Department/School, within 3 years of their appointment. During this three-year fellowship period, IPHW Research Fellow are based in the IPHW. This will allow outputs, impact, and funding achieved during the post-doctoral term to be used in the University REF submission (in the relevant UoA).

A P2P agreement is developed and agreed with the Director of the Institute and the relevant Head of Department when the post-doctoral fellows first join the University community. This mirrors the P2P arrangements agreed with all permanent members of ASER (and ASE) staff. Here, clear expectations and targets are mapped out for three-year fellowship term providing the performance criteria against which applications for promotion and permanency to their Grade 9 ASER appointment is assessed.

Each IPHW Research Fellows will:

- a) Contribute to the development of specific research programmes based on their area of expertise and support the vision and mission and research priorities of the IPHW, their home Department and the University.
- b) Contribute to the KPIs specific to REF (KPI8) citations (KPI9) and income from research (KPI10) through publications, research income generation, and enabling impact generation through their research activities.
- c) Represent the IPHW, the home Department/School, and the University in public events enhancing the IPHW, Department, and University reputation, taking over strategic roles (i.e. within academic and non-academic boards) and ensuring that the strategy of IPHW, home Department, and University is achieved.
- d) Play a key role in enabling strategic partnerships with both the public and private sector supporting research, innovation and business projects with their expertise. They enhance the University capacity to respond in a timely manner to commissioned work (for example, requests for evaluation and consultancy activities).

- e) Contribute to the teaching portfolio that IPHW offers to Schools and Departments across the University, including lectures, seminars, supervision at undergraduate and postgraduate level, CPD, and summer schools. In addition, they support the large community of postgraduate students through mentorship activities in line with KPI3 and KPI7.
- f) All the expectations set in a-e align with the requirements for our Fellows to transition to their permanent position enhancing their capacity in research, education, and leadership and providing the environment needed to become leaders in the field.