



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
Physical Activity for Health Research Centre

The Physical Activity for Health  
Research Centre (PAHRC)

**Strategy for research, knowledge  
exchange, engagement and  
impact 2023 - 2028**



# Summary

Increasing physical activity [1] and targeting sedentary behaviour [2] are major global public health goals [3]. The work of the Physical Activity for Health Research Centre (PAHRC), within the University of Edinburgh, aims to conduct research in this area that ultimately leads to enhanced health and well-being for all members of society. Our research, knowledge exchange, engagement and impact activities are designed to be internationally excellent, locally relevant and linked to government policies and priorities. Our work will follow established frameworks, have an interdisciplinary approach, and focus on all aspects of the population.

This document outlines our Mission, Vision, Research Themes, Objectives and Strategic Focus for the period 2023 – 2028. It articulates our key areas of focus and the specific actions we will take to achieve success.

*[1] Physical activity can be undertaken in many different ways: walking, cycling, sports and active forms of recreation (for example, dance, yoga, tai chi). Physical activity can also be undertaken at work and around the home. All forms of physical activity can provide health benefits if undertaken regularly and of sufficient duration and intensity (WHO, 2018).*

*[2] Sedentary behaviour is defined as any waking behaviour characterized by an energy expenditure  $\leq 1.5$  metabolic equivalents, such as sitting, reclining, or lying down (WHO, 2018).*

*[3] Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO*



# Our Mission and Vision

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|----------------|--|
| <b>Mission</b> | To be an internationally recognised centre of excellence for research, knowledge exchange, and engagement and impact, in the field of physical activity for health |
| <b>Vision</b>  | To support people in Scotland and beyond to be more active for improved health and well-being  |

## Research themes



PAHRC members engage in a wide range of research projects which are designed to increase physical activity and target sedentary behaviour. This work can be categorised into three broad (research) themes:

1. Designing and testing interventions
2. Evaluating public health initiatives
3. Analysing and synthesising existing evidence and data



# Objectives

To meet our **Mission** and deliver our **Vision** we have 5 objectives:

1. We will develop and submit applications for funding to support research, knowledge exchange and engagement and impact activities maintaining a portfolio of internal/external, local/national, and small/medium/large funding applications across the Core team.
2. We will publish our research in peer-reviewed scientific journals.
3. We will seek to maximise engagement and impact through facilitating dissemination, uptake and use of our research by participating in the wider physical activity and health community.
4. We will mentor and develop the next generation of physical activity researchers, policy makers, advocates and practitioners.
5. We will remain at the forefront of our field through a commitment to continued professional development of our members.

These objectives and are designed to be complementary and support each other. For example, if we demonstrate substantial impact from conducting rigorous research, we will then be better placed for subsequent funding applications. If we bring in funding, we will have resources to better support our teams and retain talent. If we mentor and develop world class researchers, we are more likely to be producing rigorous and novel research. PAHRC's objectives will be delivered by members working together with internal and external partners.



# Strategic focus



PAHRC will adopt a mixed strategy, to support Core and Executive members to focus on their own strengths and interests. Each member of the PAHRC Executive team will discuss and agree their strategic focus with the PAHRC director, and this will be reviewed on an annual basis. Each Executive member will be encouraged to identify 2-3 complementary strategies. Examples of strategies that may be selected include (but are not limited to);

- A focus on global questions and topics, linking to WHO objectives;
- A focus on national/local questions and topics, linking to Scottish Government objectives;
- A focus on impact and knowledge exchange (KE) activities based on research already conducted;
- A focus on specific methods to make the most of existing skillsets;
- A focus on developing new skills to be at the cutting edge of latest developments;
- A focus on internal or external collaboration and networking;
- A focus on securing grants from specific funders or funding streams;
- A focus on PhD supervision and mentoring early career researchers.

PAHRC's strategic focus will align with several School, College and University research priorities including health and wellbeing, inequalities, sustainability, childhood and youth, and data and digital. Our research will be guided by national and international physical activity policy frameworks, including Scotland's Systems-Based Approach to Physical Activity (Public Health Scotland 2022) and the WHO's Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA 2018) and will align with the relevant WHO Sustainable Development Goals. These include good health and wellbeing (SDG3), quality education (SDG4), gender equality (SDG5), reduced inequality (SDG10), sustainable cities and communities (SDG11), and climate action (SDG13) (WHO 2015).



Our approach to publications, engagement and impact, research funding and cultivating a positive and vibrant research environment will take cognisance of the working methods of the Research Excellence Framework 2028, with a view to maintaining or enhancing University of Edinburgh's performance relative to other UK units returned to sub-panel 24.

## *The PAHRC Team*



PAHRC membership will be comprised of five categories:

- **PAHRC Leadership Team** consists of the Director and the Deputy Director(s).
- **PAHRC Executive** consists of University-funded staff members of the PAHRC Core group who have responsibility for the day-to-day organisational and operational activities of the Centre.
- **PAHRC Core** consists of individuals who are based in Moray House School of Education & Sport, or any College of the University who consider their main research focus to be on physical activity for health. This includes: the Leadership Team; Executive group; Research Assistants and Fellows; MRes or PhD researchers (where the principal supervisor is part of the PAHRC Executive); Teaching Fellows; Honorary Professors and Fellows; and Visiting scholars.
- **PAHRC Associate** members come from within Moray House School of Education & Sport, or any College of the University who consider that physical activity for health is part of their research interest. This includes Associate MRes or PhD researchers (where the researcher is based in another School/College but has at least one supervisor who is part of the PAHRC Executive).
- **Friends of PAHRC** are individuals or groups external to the University of Edinburgh or collaborate with, or who wish to be informed of the activities of the Centre. They may be academic members of staff in other Institutions, or non-academic individuals, groups and organisations from policy and practice.



# The PAHRC Team Structure



PGR = postgraduate research, RA = research associate, RF = research fellow, GH = guaranteed hours, PAHRC = physical activity for health research centre



# PAHRC Ethos



Underpinning all of what we do, we have identified the following principles that encapsulate the ethos and environment of PAHRC:

- P** Practice what we preach for example by doing walk and talk meetings, standing ovations and active travel
- A** Applaud endeavour, our motto is that “efforts are successes”
- H** Help and support one another
- R** Regularly connect, attend weekly meetings and contribute
- C** Collaborate; work together and with other colleagues

This ethos will be supported by local PAHRC plans and actions including:

- Use of rooms and shared physical space in St Leonard’s Land;
- A revamped weekly seminar format e.g. 4-week cycle: high quality external speakers (open to partners), internal speakers, sharing sessions, walk and talk.
- Informal PhD and post-doc meet-ups and training events.
- Maintaining a supportive (not competitive) environment with regular opportunities for members to share information on our activities, efforts and successes and collaborate with each other.

