

Chief Executive Board Report September 2025

1 Designation as World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Digital Health Equity

In May 2024, we were invited by the World Health Organization (WHO) Europe to become the world's first WHO Collaborating Centre for Digital Health Equity, in recognition of our work on digital health equity and its strategic collaborations to date with the WHO on this topic.

Following a period of negotiation with the WHO and wider engagement in Wales, in July 2025, the WHO Director General approved the designation in principle for the usual four-year term. Following discussions with Welsh Government officials to ensure that the Centre would deliver benefit for the people of Wales, our formal application was submitted to the WHO, and on the 11 September 2025, the WHO European Director, Dr Hans Kluge, confirmed in writing that our application has been successful.

WHO collaborating centres are institutions such as research institutes, parts of universities or academies, which are designated by the WHO Director-General to carry out activities in support of the Organization's programmes. Currently, there are over 800 WHO collaborating centres in over 80 Member States around the world working with WHO on areas such as nursing, occupational health, communicable diseases, nutrition, mental health, chronic diseases and health technologies. We were also designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing in 2018.

This is a significant achievement and excellent recognition of the skills and quality of work by our Research, Data and Digital Directorate and particular recognition of the excellent work and international leadership of Alisha Davies, our Head of Research and Development.

The Collaborating Centre will bring a significant benefit to Wales and will also support the WHO Europe's efforts to ensure equity in digital health transformation nationally, regionally and for global systems. The Centre will:

- ❖ strengthen capability for digital health equity
- ❖ inform WHO's technical guidance for equity in digital health
- ❖ enhance technical cooperation and advocacy among regional stakeholders for equity in digital health.

The scope includes research, capacity building and technical guidance, and is strongly aligned with our strategic priorities and the WHO's global and regional programmes.

We are working with the WHO to arrange communications and a launch event on a convenient date with, we hope, the Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing will be launching it with us.

2 New Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Plan

Our new Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention Plan was launched in September. If fully implemented this plan could prevent people from having more than 1,000 heart attacks and strokes, making a significant impact patient on outcome and quality of life, and also saving £18m for the NHS and Social Care sectors in Wales across three years.

The new plan called an ABCD Plus Approach seeks to bring successful experience from other countries to Wales. The Plan can be found here: [New plan to prevent cardiovascular disease could mean more than 1000 fewer heart attacks and strokes in Wales, as well as millions in savings for the NHS - Public Health Wales](#)

3 Reducing Inequalities in School Food Environments (RISE)

The Children's Nutrition and Healthy Weight Team in Public Health Wales is a partner in a successful UK Research and Innovation funded project to reduce inequalities in school food environments. The programme is to improve the provision, uptake and consumption of school food across the UK. Partners include LACA, Newcastle University, Queen's University Belfast, Glasgow Caledonian University and Public Health Wales.

In Wales, researchers will work with two local authorities to assess menu quality, children's food choices and the impact of Universal Free School Meals. Surveys, interviews and monitoring will inform improvements and support healthier choices. A launch event on the 17 September brought together policy, practice and research leaders, including the Future Generations Commissioner, the Welsh Local Government Association, LACA, academic partners and Public Health Wales.

4 Exercise PEGASUS – UK Pandemic Preparedness Exercise

On the 18 September 2025, Exercise PEGASUS, the UK pandemic preparedness exercise set to assess the UK's ability to respond to a pandemic, commenced. Exercise PEGASUS will be the largest ever simulation of a pandemic in UK history and will involve participation from all UK Governments and representation from public bodies and Local Resilience Fora.

A pandemic remains among the top risks on the UK's Risk Register, and this exercise is an opportunity to test the four nation capabilities, plans, protocols and procedures in the event of another major pandemic.

The exercise is taking place from September to November 2025, with 'Core' exercise days taken place through this time in three phases, simulating the first

phases of a pandemic: emergence, containment, and mitigation. A fourth phase (recovery) is also planned for 2026.

A Wales Coordination Group has been established by the Welsh Government, and we have been working closely with the Welsh Government, and partners, in the preparation and the current response to the Exercise.

We will be undertaking our own learning evaluation as an organisation and will be feeding into the Welsh Government and UK Government learning processes following the Exercise.

5 Annual General Meeting

On the 17 September 2025, we held our Annual General Meeting in our office space in Carmarthen. It was an excellent opportunity to showcase all the work across the organisation and to launch our 2024 – 2025 Annual Report.

We had 31 people with us face-to-face and an additional 61 people who followed the meeting online. It was wonderful to see many of our staff who work in West Wales joining us for the event. It was also an opportunity to showcase the work of our infection service, and our microbiology laboratory teams, in West Wales and we had a focused presentation from them on the excellent work that they do for the people of Mid and West Wales. Big thanks to Tom Fowler (Deputy National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services), Robin Howe (National Clinical Lead for Infection Services), Julian Rogers (Interim Deputy Head of Operations, Infection Services) and Kelly Ward (Interim Head of Operations, infection Services) for such a great presentation.

We also had a presentation from Jim McManus (National Director of Health and Wellbeing), and Rachel Burr, Director of Diabetes UK Cymru, on our *Tackling Diabetes Together* work that we have been doing with partners across Wales over the last twelve months to help prevent Type 2 Diabetes and improve the health and wellbeing for those people with Diabetes. It was great to see the close working between us and Diabetes UK.

I would also like to thank Neil Stoodley (Interim Head of Finance) for his excellent finance presentation, Pippa Britton (Chair) for chairing the event so well and Clare Jenkins (Vice-Chair) for facilitating the questions session, and also Stef Humphries (Board Support Officer), Liz Blayney (Deputy Board Secretary and Deputy Head of the Board Business Unit) and Paul Veysey (Board Secretary and Head of the Board Business Unit) for all their time in organising such a successful event.

6 Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Nurse of the Year Finalist

I am delighted to say that Rachel Evans, our Senior Public Health Midwife/Health Visitor Breastfeeding Lead, has been shortlisted as a finalist in the RCN Nurse of the year award for her exceptional leadership in Infant Feeding.

Rachel's work has been funded by the Child Poverty Grant and focused on implementing a multi-component intervention that increased access to peer support in two areas of Wales that previously had none, and shifted community cultural norms around breastfeeding.

Rachel successfully brought together local stakeholders and a national third-sector organisation to coordinate this project, which was recognised as highly effective in an independent evaluation conducted by Swansea University.

Huge congratulations to Rachel on being a finalist – it is a great achievement which is very well deserved.

7 Update on the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry

The following provides an update on the current and new activities of the organisation in relation to the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry up to 12 September 2025.

7.1 Modules 2 (Core UK Government Decision Making) and 2B (Core Welsh Government Decision Making)

The Inquiry has advised that the combined report for Modules 2, 2A, 2B and 2C will be published on the 20 November 2025. We will attend the publication event in London alongside Senior Counsel. Arrangements are also being put in place internally to manage publication of the report and any media interest that may be received, along with a process for a detailed review of the report and debrief to the Executive Team and Board thereafter.

7.2 Module 3 (Impact on Healthcare Systems)

The Inquiry has indicated that the report for this Module will be published in Spring 2026.

7.3 Module 4 (Vaccines and Therapeutics)

The Inquiry has indicated that their report for this Module will be published in Spring 2026, shortly after the publication of the Module 3 report.

7.4 Module 5 (Procurement)

The Inquiry has indicated that their report for this Module will be published in Summer 2026.

7.5 Module 6 (Care Sector)

Public hearings commenced on the 30 June 2025 and concluded on the 31 July 2025 and Professor Fu-Meng Khaw gave evidence to the Inquiry on behalf of Public Health Wales (as our corporate witness) on the 8 July 2025, supported by Counsel and the Head of the Public Inquiry Response.

Following discussions with Counsel, it was decided that Public Health Wales would not make an oral closing submission at the public hearings, nor would we submit a written closing submissions to the Inquiry. The Inquiry has not yet confirmed when the report for this Module will be published. Based on the timelines provided for the reports in Modules 3-5, and Module 7 being heard ahead of Module 6, it is possible that this report could be published late 2026/early 2027.

7.6 Module 7 (Test, Trace and Isolate)

The Module 7 public hearings commenced on the 12 May 2025 and concluded on 30 May 2025. The Inquiry has not yet confirmed when the report for this Module will be published. Based on the timelines provided for the reports in Modules 3-5, and Module 7 being heard ahead of Module 6, it is possible that this report could be published in late 2026.

7.7 Module 8 (Children and Young People)

Public Health Wales is not a Core Participant in the Module. The PI Response Team has supported the response to requests for evidence from the Inquiry Team. Public hearings for this Module are scheduled to take place between the 29 September 2025 and the 23 October 2025. These hearings will be monitored by our Public Inquiry Response Team and daily hearing reports provided, highlighting any matters of interest for Public Health Wales.

7.8 Module 9 (Economic Response)

Public Health Wales is not a Core Participant in this Module, and we have had no involvement in this Module to date. Public hearings for this Module are scheduled to take place between the 24 November 2025 and the 18 December 2025. These hearings will be monitored by our PI Response Team and daily hearing reports provided, highlighting any matters of interest for Public Health Wales.

7.9 Impact on Society

Public Health Wales is not a Core Participant in this Module and we have had no involvement in this Module to date. Public Hearings for this Module are scheduled to take place between the 16 February and the 5 March 2026. These hearings will be monitored by our PI Response Team and daily hearing reports provided, highlighting any matters of interest for Public Health Wales.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to receive this information.

Tracey Cooper

CHIEF EXECUTIVE