

# Chief Executive Board Report March 2026

## 1 Public Accountability Meeting

On the 26 February, we had a public accountability meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, the Director General for Health, Social Care and Early Years and other Welsh Government officials. This is the first round of a new approach to public accountability meetings for all NHS organisations, following the recommendations within the External Ministerial Advisory Group on NHS Performance and Productivity.

We were required to submit an information and assurance pack in advance, which is attached to this report, to cover the agenda items of:

- Delivery of services
- Health Protection
- Health Improvement
- Strengthening the organisation
- Local issues

This was a scrutiny session which focused on performance, assurance and delivery with a considerable amount of time in relation to our sexual health test and post service and screening services.

## 2 Meetings with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change and Rural Affairs and the Cabinet Secretary for Education

On the 2 February, Pippa Britton, our Chairperson, Sumina Azam, our National Director of Policy and International Health and I met with the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate change and Rural Affairs. This was a constructive meeting in which we discussed our public health policy advocacy areas and provided the Deputy First Minister with an update on our work in climate change and the range of work we undertake across his broader portfolio areas.

In addition, on the 17 March 2026, Pippa, Sumina, Jim McManus, our National Director of Health and Wellbeing and I met with the Cabinet Secretary for Education. Again, this was a positive meeting during which we discussed our public health policy areas and also provided an update on our work with education partners and settings.

## 3 Re-designation as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Wellbeing

The Policy and International Health Directorate at Public Health Wales has been re-designated as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre in investment for health and wellbeing for a further four years (2026-2030).

This recognises its unique role as the first and only Collaborating Centre in the world dedicated to increasing investment in the well-being of people, communities and societies. It also secures Wales' continued contribution to, and benefit from, a global network of more than 800 Collaborating Centres across more than 80 countries.

Since its designation in 2018, the Collaborating Centre has delivered a wide range of influential work that has strengthened evidence- and value-informed policy. The Centre's diverse and innovative portfolio covers health equity, well-being economy and investing in prevention, health in all policies, health impact assessment, sustainable development, behavioural science, healthy settings and trauma-informed approaches across the life course. It has developed, mobilised and shared actionable intelligence, guidance and practical tools, international insights and novel solutions on how to invest in a more sustainable way to improve people's well-being, reduce inequity, and build stronger, more resilient communities, systems and economies.

The Collaborating Centre has been working in close collaboration with the Welsh Government and the WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development in Venice, Italy (the Venice Office), as well as with key partners across Wales, the UK and internationally. It has been instrumental in progressing key public health priorities nationally and globally, growing Wales' and our visibility and impact, and bringing opportunities for professional development and income generation.

It has also enabled the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the WHO/Europe and the Welsh Government towards healthy prosperous lives for all, and the recognition of Wales as a leader nation in implementing well-being economy with health and equity at the heart.

Going forward, the Collaborating Centre will continue to expand its national and global impact through:

- providing evidence and expertise to adopt and implement effective, sustainable inter-sectoral policies and strategies for well-being and health equity across the life course
- building knowledge and capacity for applying novel economics and value thinking, tools and modelling, impact assessments and behavioural insights, to advance well-being economies for healthy people, planet and societies
- accelerating international learning, partnership working and resource mobilisation, convening multi-disciplinary forums and dialogues, and developing novel solutions for placing population health and prevention at the heart of all policies and investments.

These ambitions build on the Centre's strong track record and reflect Wales' commitment to being an inspiring global example for advancing new thinking and approaches towards building a healthier, fairer and more sustainable future for all, leaving no one behind.

## 4 Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Development Programme

Our Nursing, Quality and Integrated Governance team, in collaboration with the Royal Collage of Nursing (RCN), delivered a bespoke Nursing and Midwifery Leadership Development Programme for Public Health Wales, which held its final session on the 23 February.

Fifteen nurses and midwives successfully completed the programme. The final day included a celebration of their achievements and an opportunity for participants to showcase their work through poster presentations. The event also featured a session with exemplary nursing and midwifery leaders from across Wales.

This was the first time the programme had been delivered. Designed specifically for the unique context of public health, it was delivered over 10 days across a six-month period. The aim was to cultivate a new generation of confident, compassionate and strategic nursing and midwifery leaders within Public Health Wales, capable of shaping the future of public health through a nursing and midwifery lens.

As part of the assessment process, participants were required to undertake a service improvement project within their area of practice and complete a 3,000-word written assignment focused on leadership. The programme aligned with Agored Cymru Level 7 learning outcomes.

Alongside academic development, the programme offered valuable opportunities for peer support, networking, and professional growth, as well as the chance to gain a Level 7 leadership qualification.

Following the success of this inaugural cohort, our intention is to run the programme again.

## 5 'The Path to Safer Beginnings in Wales: A national assurance assessment of Maternity and Neonatal care and services' Report

On the 25 February 2026, Professor Sally Holland, Chair of the Independent Oversight Panel for the Maternity and Neonatal National Assurance Assessment, wrote to health boards and trusts in Wales to share the publication of "*The Path to Safer Beginnings in Wales A national assurance assessment of Maternity and Neonatal care and services.*"

This assurance assessment was requested by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to take account of the findings of the recent reviews of maternity and neonatal services across the UK, including in Swansea Bay. The review was to provide a 'real time' assessment of safety, but also with identifying examples of good practice, risks and concerns.

The independent panel comprised of a group of individuals with national expertise in their respective fields, including a senior midwife in Public Health Wales.

The approach aimed to:

- Draw extensively on engagement with women, parents and families, community and advocacy groups, and with multidisciplinary staff
- Consider inequalities and ensure engagement with those whose voices are seldom heard
- Examine the whole system that provides and influences maternity and neonatal care, across the whole maternity journey from pregnancy to postnatal care, in hospital and community
- Consider all aspects of safety and quality – physical, psychological, social and cultural
- Learn from positive aspects of care and services using a strengths-based approach
- Consider the short and long-term impact of care and services during pregnancy, birth, postnatally and the early days and weeks of life
- Draw on data and evidence to inform analysis and recommendations.

The national recommendations from the report are listed below:

- Joined up national perinatal leadership to ensure consistency in strategic planning, quality and safety across Wales
- A universal offer of quality care throughout the perinatal journey
- Urgent attention to critical clinical safety systems
- Adequate staffing and estates to deliver safe and quality care
- Mental health support
- Optimal neonatal care commissioning
- A reliable process for review and investigation, that involves families and leads to timely learning
- Developing an in-depth understanding of need, experience and outcomes through engagement and evaluation.

Our Public Health Wales midwifery professionals leadership group has been asked to lead our own organisational assessment against each of the recommendations to support the delivery of improvement work across the system. This will be overseen by the Director of Nursing, Quality and Integrated Governance and reported through to the Executive Team and, where appropriate, our Quality Safety and Improvement Board Committee. The full report can be found here [National assurance assessment of maternity and neonatal services in Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

## **6 Oral Health of Year One (5-year old) School children in Wales 2024-2025**

Our Dental Public Health team, working closely with the Welsh Oral Health Information Unit at Cardiff University, health boards and participating primary schools, delivered a successful dental inspection programme. The [report](#) was published on the 23 February 2026, and provides useful information to inform needs assessment, dental policy and service planning.

The Dental Epidemiology Programme collected data from 8,526 Year One children (five-years of age) from 656 state-maintained mainstream schools in Wales (27.4% of the population). The two measures of dental caries experience that were used were: prevalence and severity. Prevalence records how many children had decayed, missing or filled teeth, whilst severity describes the average number of teeth affected by tooth decay per child. Overall, there was a statistically significant reduction in the prevalence and severity of dental caries from 2022/23 to 2024/25: 32.4% to 27.2% and 1.11 to 0.95 respectively.

Since 2007/8 the reduction has almost halved, with a fall from approximately 47% to 27.2% and from 2.0 to 0.95. This is a striking reduction for a non-communicable disease which is very positive news. However, oral health inequalities remain intransigent (higher levels of disease amongst those from deprived areas) and there has been little change in this measure since 2007/8. Equally, those with the disease are likely to experience three times the number of teeth affected compared to the national average. One in five parents reported that oral health impacted upon their quality of life and this increased to two in five, for those children with dental caries. So, still a lot of work to do but positive to see significant improvements in the prevalence and severity of dental caries in Wales.

## **7 Launch of the Trauma-informed Wales Public Narrative event – including the #TimeToBeKind National Campaign**

On the 12 February 2026, over 120 people from sectors across Wales joined our Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Hub Wales at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells for the Trauma-informed Wales Public Narrative event.

As co-leads of the implementation of the Trauma-informed Wales Framework, published in 2022, ACE Hub Wales has been co-developing the narrative to affect a shift from a programme of work to a social movement that reflects the language, meaning and shared understanding of experiences of trauma and adverse childhood experiences across Wales.

The event showcased the narrative itself, the culmination of 18-months' work co-creating, engaging and testing how we can communicate shared meaning and ambition in a way that reaches all of society. We have worked with community leaders and influencers, Co-production Wales, third sector and community led organisations, statutory services and children and young people – all with living experience of adversity and trauma. And all of whom were represented at the event.

The day itself was rooted in creative methodology and storytelling. We were delighted that the Minister for Children and Social Care, Dawn Bowden MS, gave her support to this work through a recorded speech, as did the Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed Powys, Dafydd Llewellyn, whose office is leading the way to become a trauma and ACE-informed team.

We were joined by spoken word poet Duke AL who also led a workshop on creating your own public narrative. We had presentations and input from a range of partners who have helped to develop this work including inspirational input from young people

from the Wallich, the third sectors homelessness charity, whose contributions on what trauma-informed meant to them moved everyone in the room.

We heard about the importance of inclusion: of living experience of racial trauma, stigma and shame in substance use recovery and digital storytelling of migrant stories. The day also saw the launch of the third in a series of #timetobekind campaigns, and a film developed to send the message that Kindness is Everybody's Business.

The campaign kicked off on the 13 February and was shown on the BBC, ITV and S4C from the 23 February. Going forward, this work will continue to inform how we embed and sustain whole- system change to support hope, compassion, connection and kindness and meet the commitments to implementing the trauma-informed Wales Framework in the Mental health and wellbeing strategy and cross government priorities.

Link to the Public Narrative (Cymraeg) [Chyflwyno Naratif Cyhoeddus ar gyfer Cymru sy'n Ystyriol o Drawma - Trauma-Informed Wales](#)

Link the Public Narrative (English) [Delivering a Public Narrative for a Trauma-Informed Wales - Trauma-Informed Wales](#)

Link to film and campaign (Cymraeg) [DEPARTMENT OF KINDNESS | WELSH #AmseriFodynGaredig 2026 - Asedau Cymdeithasol - Trauma-Informed Wales](#)

Link to film and campaign English [DEPARTMENT OF KINDNESS | ENGLISH #TimeToBeKind 2026 - Social Assets - Trauma-Informed Wales](#)

## **8 Well-being Economics and Value (WEAVE) Team and Programme launched**

Established in response to the growing need for robust economic insight to guide prevention and public health investment, the WEAVE team works closely with the Welsh Government, NHS Wales, the World Health Organization (WHO) and wider partners to strengthen evidence and value informed decision making and investing in prevention.

The launch event on the 12 February 2026, brought together nearly 100 participants spanning government and academic institutions, NHS Wales, wider public and third sector stakeholders and international institutions. The event showcased the wide WEAVE portfolio of work including on prevention, immunisation, tobacco control, tuberculosis, healthy high streets, well-being and foundational economies. Key partner organisations presented relevant and collaborative work and endorsed the work of the team, including:

- the Chief Economist and Head of Health Economics, Advanced Analytics and Policy Modelling in the Welsh Government outlined work relating to economic inactivity and health expectancy rates.
- the WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development in Venice, Italy, set the work of the WEAVE team in the context of global work on impact investment and health inequities.
- Wales-based partners, including from the NHS Confederation and Hywel Dda University Health Board, outlined key opportunities for the team to connect with wider work on prevention and well-being economies.

The WEAVE team aims to strengthen capacities and partnerships across Wales and internationally through knowledge mobilisation, advancing economic thinking and modelling, developing evidence and novel tools, and enabling income generation. This will support value-based, prevention-focused decision making and funding prioritisation towards fairer, more resilient and sustainable health systems.

## 9 Building Community Capacity in Wales Workshop

On the 6 March, we co-hosted an all-day workshop with the Lloyds Bank Foundation based around building community capacity in Wales. The event involved partners across the breadth of public services third sector and donor organisations all focused on how we can support communities to build capacity within and across their neighbourhoods. It has generated a lot of interest for follow up discussions in relation to close working together and actions to involve a range of partners in specific parts of Wales.

## 10 Change Portfolio and Governance

A key aspect of our refreshed Strategic Plan for 2026/2029, which will be considered by the Board on the 26 March 2026, is our Change Portfolio. The portfolio reflects our most significant change programmes required to deliver our strategic priorities. The programmes included on the portfolio have a public health (lung cancer screening), digital (digital health protection system) or organisational (web transformation) focus and represent our key strategic developments.

We established a Change Board in 2025/26 to provide oversight and assurance of our change portfolio. This includes ensuring that programmes are prioritised and aligned with our organisational strategic direction, along with ensuring that they are appropriately resourced and effectively delivering, including realising agreed benefits and outcomes.

The Change Board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive and is made up of the Executive Team, along with colleagues from key corporate functions, provides a key assurance and scrutiny role and focuses on four key areas:

- *Change strategy* - ensuring that we are delivering the right programmes to support the delivery of our strategy in line with our agreed strategic priority route maps.

- *Change design* – ensuring that we are commissioning and designing programmes to achieve their agreed benefits in line with our organisational standards.
- *Change delivery* – ensuring that we are effectively delivering our agreed change programmes.
- *Change value* – ensuring that we are realising the benefits identified by each programme.

The Change Board will become increasingly important for us as we enter 2026-2027 with a considerable portfolio of change across the organisation.

## **11 Changes to the Executive Team**

On the 31 March 2026, Angela Williams, our Interim Director of Operations and Finance, will retire and move on to exciting pastures new after 38 years in the NHS and nine years with us in Public Health Wales. Angela has been exceptional in her time with us and it has been a privilege to work more closely with Angela in her current role of Interim Executive Director of Operations and Finance for the last year. Angela has made a significant difference to the health of the people of Wales throughout her career, and is the epitome of a committed, dedicated and values-focused public servant.

We are delighted that we will have another month of Angela in the role, as she returns for three days a week in April, and we will miss Angela hugely when she moves on at the end of April. Diolch yn fawr iawn for everything you have done Angela and we will have more opportunity to wish you well before the end of April.

On the 13 May, we have a new member joining us to be the newly titled Executive Director of Strategy, Finance and Performance – Zoe Pietrzak, who joins us from her role as Regional Director of Finance in the East of England with a longstanding career in senior finance leadership roles in the NHS in England. We look forward to Zoe joining us with the increased focus of the role around also providing enhanced system leadership across the finance and planning communities, in order to support and inform an acceleration in prevention-based resource allocation.

I also want to thank Neil Stoodley, our Interim Head of Finance, who will be providing Interim Director of Finance cover for the remaining two days a week in April, and also the first two weeks in May in advance of Zoe starting – thank you Neil.

## **12 Update on the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry and the Public Accounts and Public Administration Senedd Committee**

### **12.1 Public Hearings**

Since our last update, the Public Inquiry has heard evidence in its final Module 10, Impact on Society (16 February – 5 March 2026). We were not involved in this module and did not provide any witness evidence. The evidence in this module focused on the impact the pandemic had on the UK population, with a particular focus on key workers, the most vulnerable, the bereaved, mental health and wellbeing. The Public Inquiry Response Team monitored the public hearings and provided daily



hearing reports, highlighting any matters of relevance to Public Health Wales. There was limited reference to Public Health Wales in this module.

The Inquiry has now completed its public hearings for all ten modules and moves into a new phase of its proceedings, reporting.

## 12.2 Report Publication

The Inquiry intends on publishing five reports this year, with the remaining three reports being published early to mid-2027.

### *Module 3 – Healthcare Systems*

The Inquiry's report into Module 3, Healthcare systems, will be published on the 19 March 2026 at midday. We were not core participants in this module and therefore we will not receive advanced sight of the report ahead of its publication at midday. Plans have been put in place to review the report following publication and to plan any communications response, both internally and externally.

### *Module 4 – Vaccines and Therapeutics*

The Inquiry's report into Module 4, vaccines and therapeutics, will be published on the 16 April 2026 at midday. We are a core participant in this module, and have been invited to the publication event in London, where we will receive a copy of the report in the morning ahead of publication. Paul Veysey and Dr Chris Johnson are attending the event and a confidential briefing ahead of publication, with other colleagues is being arranged. The purpose of the confidential briefing is to highlight any matters of significance and/or importance to Public Health Wales and to plan any communication response, before the report is published.

### *Remaining Reports*

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|---|-------------------------|
| 1. Module 5 – Procurement               | Summer 2026             |
| 2. Module 6 – Care Sector               | Towards the end of 2026 |
| 3. Module 7 – Test, Trace and Isolate   | Towards the end of 2026 |
| 4. Module 8 – Children and Young People | First half of 2027      |
| 5. Module 9 – Financial Response        | First half of 2027      |
| 6. Module 10 – Impact on Society        | Middle of 2027          |

The Inquiry has indicated that reports in all modules will be published by the end of the first half of 2027.

## 12.3 Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee

The Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee has published its report on the *Consideration of the UK COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report: Resilience and Preparedness, Examination of the gaps identified in the preparedness and response of the Welsh Government and Welsh public bodies during the COVID-19 pandemic*, on the 11 March 2026.

The report contains 28 recommendations for the Welsh Government to consider and respond to. By comparison, the UK Covid-19 Inquiry report for Module 1 contained 10 recommendations.

Our Health Protection and Screening Services directorate, and the Executive Team, are considering the report and its recommendations, which will come to the Board by way of an update.

### **13 Awards**

Huw Williams, Head of Emergency Preparedness and Response, has been appointed as an Honorary Member of the Faculty of Public Health in recognition of his sustained contribution across Wales. His leadership in emergency preparedness, resilience and response has supported the development of whole-system approaches and the consistent embedding of public health considerations within planning and response arrangements. This appointment reflects the high regard in which he is held by colleagues across the system, evidenced by consistently positive feedback on his collaborative and strategic impact.

Dr Tom Fowler, Deputy National Director for Health Protection and Screening Services at Public Health Wales, has been recognised with the Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) Chair's Award for Excellence. AHCS is the UK professional body for healthcare science practitioners, life science industry professionals and clinical research practitioners. The Chair's Award is a prestigious national honour, presented annually to individuals who have made sustained and meaningful contributions to healthcare science, including advancing the profession, strengthening patient safety and supporting the work of the Academy. Dr Fowler's inclusion in this national cohort reflects a career-long commitment to working alongside, supporting and championing healthcare scientists. In his current role, he continues to exemplify this partnership approach within Public Health Wales, holding—on behalf of the Office of the Medical Director—the professional responsibility for the healthcare science workforce. This recognition celebrates individual leadership while also reflecting Public Health Wales' strong contribution to the UK healthcare science community, and a shared commitment to excellence, collaboration and innovation across the NHS.

Big congratulations to both Huw and Tom for such very well deserved awards.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to receive this information.

**Tracey Cooper**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**