GIG CYMRU NHS WALES

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Adroddiad lefel sefydliad

Organisation-level Report

Safon Cydraddoldeb y Gweithlu (SCG)
Gweithlu cynhwysol sy'n darparu'r gofal gorau

Workforce Equality Standard (WES)
An inclusive workforce provides the best care

1. Public Health Wales (PHW) Organisational-level data snapshot

Priority Indicator	Data identified issue / Area requiring improvement	What Improvement Looks Like
Leadership and Representation	Below parity appointment outcomes and uneven progression into senior roles despite a representative workforce	More consistent conversion from shortlisting to appointment and improved progression into senior roles
Professional development	High, consistent, and near-parity appraisal coverage across all staff groups	Sustained high appraisal coverage with continued equitable access and quality of development
Disciplinary and capability	Low case volumes but consistent directional disparity across some characteristics	Consistent and proportionate application of disciplinary processes supported by strong governance and oversight
Workplace behaviours	Very low levels of harassment, bullying and discrimination across all groups	Sustained low prevalence and consistent behavioural standards across the organisation
Wellbeing, safety and voice	Very low exposure to harm with generally strong speaking-up confidence	Continued low harm exposure and sustained confidence in speaking up
Workplace conditions sustainability	Strong access to flexibility and adjustments but continued high burnout and workload pressure	Reduced burnout and presenteeism with clear evidence of sustainable workload and recovery

2. Purpose and Scope

This report presents an equity-focused analysis of the Workforce Equality Standard data for PHW It highlights where staff experience differs by protected characteristic, where intersections deepen disadvantage, and where PHW has the strongest opportunities to act.

The scope covers all protected characteristics captured in WES. It uses the same national indicators and methodology to ensure comparability and the focus is on actionable findings, not exhaustive description.

To better describe organisational culture, the WES Indicators were grouped into six domains, aligned to contributors influencing workplace experience.

- **Leadership and Progression**
- **Professional Development**
- **Disciplinary and Capability**
- **Workplace Behaviours**
- **Wellbeing and Safety**
- **Workplace Conditions**

A thematic analysis allows more strategic insight, moving from a long list of indicators to a coherent organisational story for PHW. Grouping indicators that conceptually belong together allows patterns to emerge and thus help identify systemic challenges rather than seeing indicator silos. It also allows anchoring the intersectional narrative in lived experience domains.

3. Executive Summary

PHW demonstrates a strong and well-balanced equity profile, with high performance across professional development, workplace behaviours, and wellbeing and safety. Appraisal processes are consistently and equitably delivered across all staff groups, and levels of harassment, discrimination, and physical harm remain substantially below national benchmarks. Flexible working is widely available and strongly experienced across the workforce, and staff generally report confidence in speaking up, indicating a positive and responsive organisational environment.

Moderate equity challenges are present in leadership progression and disciplinary processes. Ethnic minority staff remain less likely to be appointed from shortlisting, and progression into senior roles is uneven, indicating inconsistency at key decision-making points. Disciplinary data shows a higher likelihood of some groups entering formal processes, although overall volumes remain low.

Workplace conditions represent a further area of focus. While access to flexibility and workplace adjustments is strong, burnout and pressure to attend work when unwell remain high across the workforce. This indicates that existing support mechanisms are not yet fully translating into sustainable working conditions.

Overall, PHW's equity challenge is centred on improving consistency in decision-making and ensuring that strong workplace systems translate into sustainable and equitable outcomes, while maintaining strong performance across all other domains.

Executive Assurance Questions
Are recruitment and progression decisions consistently delivering equitable outcomes across all staff groups?
Are appraisal and development processes consistently and equitably delivered across all staff groups?
Are disciplinary decisions applied consistently and fairly across all staff groups?
Are behavioural standards continuing to be maintained across all teams?
Do staff feel safe and confident to raise concerns across the organisation?
Are staff experiencing sustainable workload and recovery in practice, not just access to support?

4. Domain Profiles

PHW has a workforce profile broadly aligned with NHS Wales, with moderate diversity and good representation across several protected characteristics, providing a solid basis for equity analysis.

- **Ethnic minority representation is close to the national average (10.4% vs 11.3%), with a balanced mix across Asian, Black, and Mixed/Other groups. This indicates a meaningful ethnic minority pipeline, sufficient to interpret progression and experience outcomes without heavy pipeline caveats.**
- **The gender profile is slightly more balanced than the NHS Wales norm, with a higher proportion of men and fewer women than average, though still female-majority.**
- **Disabled staff representation is notably higher than the national average (9.5% vs 6.3%)**
- **LGBTQIA+ representation is also higher than national levels (6.6% vs 3.8%), strengthening the robustness of experience-based analysis for these groups.**
- **The age profile is skewed toward mid-career staff, with a higher proportion aged 31–50 and fewer staff aged over 51 than the national picture.**
- **Religious affiliation broadly mirrors NHS Wales overall, although *Unknown* responses are lower than national levels, indicating good data completeness.**
- ***Prefer Not to Say* rates are in line with NHS Wales, suggesting typical disclosure confidence.**

Overall, PHW has a representative and well-balanced workforce, with sufficient diversity across multiple characteristics to support reliable interpretation of equity outcomes in subsequent domains. The workforce remains sufficiently diverse across key characteristics to support robust equity analysis, with no indication that pipeline constraints explain observed outcome differences.

4.1 Equity scoring

Equity RAG ratings were derived through a triangulated assessment of each domain, combining the scale of inequality (difference from benchmark), the consistency of patterns across protected characteristics, and the robustness of the data. Particular weight was given to signals that were repeated across multiple groups and indicators, while findings based on small numbers or inconsistent patterns were treated cautiously to avoid over-interpretation. The Equity Scorecard and ratings are designed to support data interpretation at a glance and to highlight specific areas of disparity. Priority actions have also been identified.

Rating	Meaning	Response
Minimal or no inequity	Broad parity; no consistent disadvantage pattern	Maintain what works
Mild inequity	Small or inconsistent differences	Monitor for deterioration
Moderate inequity	Consistent disadvantage across multiple indicators	Focused domain improvement action needed
Severe inequity	Persistent, intersectionally reinforced disadvantage	Executive oversight needed

4.2 Organisational Workforce Equity Scorecard

Domain	Overall equity signal	Characteristics most affected	Key intersectional risk signals	Comparison to national pattern	Primary equity signal	Action priority
Leadership and Representation	Moderate	Ethnic minority staff (appointments)	Ethnicity intersects with recruitment conversion; weak reinforcement elsewhere	Slightly better than national but still below parity	Recruitment and senior progression not consistently equitable	Targeted (appointment conversion and senior progression oversight)
Professional Development	Minimal	None identified	No stable intersectional patterns	Stronger than national	Appraisal delivery equitable and well embedded	Maintain and assure quality
Disciplinary & Capability	Moderate	Ethnic minority staff (disciplinary entry)	Weak intersectional reinforcement; capability data too sparse	Broadly aligned with national	Low-volume but uneven use of formal disciplinary processes	Targeted (decision-making consistency and oversight)
Workplace Behaviours	Minimal	None identified	No stable intersectional patterns	Substantially lower than national	Low prevalence of harassment and discrimination	Maintain and monitor
Wellbeing & Safety	Minimal	None identified	No stable intersectional patterns; small-numbers volatility	Substantially lower than national	Very low exposure to harm with generally strong speaking-up confidence	Maintain and monitor
Workplace Conditions	Moderate	None uniquely affected	Pressure and burnout broadly shared	Slightly better than national but still high	Support exists but workload pressure remains high	Targeted (workload sustainability and recovery)

4.3 Leadership and Progression Domain

Equity rating	Headline finding
🟠 Moderate	Interpretable recruitment conversion data, uneven but not extreme progression ratios, reasonable confidence in fair progression, absence of severe or compounded disadvantage

Overview

The Leadership and Progression domain for PHW shows a mixed picture, with generally reasonable representation and progression confidence, but clear friction at recruitment and senior transition points.

At Board level, differences between workforce and Board composition are present but not extreme, and broadly consistent with workforce composition. There is no clear evidence of systematic exclusion at Board level, although elevated *Unknown* representation suggests that non-disclosure intersects with senior roles, which should be monitored.

Progression ratios across AfC bands show uneven movement at key transition points, particularly:

- **Upper-to-senior progression, where some disparity ratios fall below parity, and**
- **Lower-to-senior progression, where ratios indicate reduced likelihood of advancement for some groups.**

These patterns suggest that progression into senior roles is less predictable than early-career progression, even where workforce representation is broadly balanced.

The clearest equity signal in this domain comes from appointment from shortlisting. The overall likelihood of ethnic minority staff being appointed is below parity (LR ≈ 0.43). While this is less severe than in some other organisations, it nonetheless indicates that shortlisting does not consistently convert into appointments for ethnic minority candidates.

Perceptions of fair progression are moderately positive across most groups, including ethnic minority staff (56.2%) and White staff (61.6%). This suggests that confidence in fairness exists, but masks underlying outcome gaps — a pattern consistent with a developing rather than mature system.

Intersectional signals

Intersectional signals are present but not strongly reinforcing. Ethnicity intersects with recruitment conversion, while disability and sexual orientation show more mixed patterns, without consistent disadvantage across all indicators.
Higher Unknown and Prefer Not to Say values at senior levels suggest that visibility and disclosure may influence leadership experience, but this signal is not consistently reinforced across progression and perception measures.

Overall, the intersectional picture indicates isolated friction points rather than cumulative disadvantage

Organisational interpretation

Leadership and progression systems in PHW appear functionally established but not fully embedded. Workforce composition provides a sufficient pipeline, and staff confidence in fair progression is reasonably strong, but recruitment and senior progression decisions are not yet delivering consistently equitable outcomes.

The primary equity risk in this domain is therefore conversion and consistency, particularly at shortlisting-to-appointment stages and senior transitions, rather than absence of opportunity or pipeline.

4.4 Professional Development Domain

Equity rating	Headline finding
Minimal	Likelihood ratios close to parity, high appraisal coverage across all characteristics, absence of reinforcing or compounded disadvantage

Overview

The Professional Development domain shows a positive and equitable picture, with high appraisal coverage across all protected characteristics and likelihood ratios close to parity.

Overall likelihood of having a recorded appraisal is near parity (LR ≈ 0.97), indicating that staff are almost equally likely to receive an appraisal regardless of protected characteristic. Appraisal coverage for ethnic minority staff is high (82.7%), closely aligned with White staff (85.0%), and gaps between groups are small and not directionally concerning.

Across gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and religion, appraisal rates are consistently in the low-to-mid-80% range, suggesting that professional development processes are well embedded and routinely delivered, rather than dependent on individual managers or teams.

Importantly, *Prefer Not to Say* and *Unknown* groups also show strong appraisal coverage, indicating that non-disclosure does not appear to limit access to development processes in PHW.

Intersectional signals

Intersectional signals are weak and non-reinforcing. No protected characteristic experiences consistently lower appraisal likelihood across multiple measures, and there is no evidence of compounded disadvantage.

The absence of intersectional inequity suggests that professional development is operating as a universal entitlement, rather than selectively experienced.

Organisational interpretation

Professional development systems in PHW appear mature and consistently applied. While appraisal coverage is not yet universal, the distribution of access is equitable, and differences between staff groups are minimal.

This domain therefore represents a clear organisational strength and does not require targeted equity intervention. This confirms that professional development is functioning as a reliable, consistently applied, and embedded organisational process.

4.5 Disciplinary and Capability Domain

Equity rating	Headline finding
🟠 Moderate	Low absolute numbers of disciplinary cases, directional differences that warrant attention but not escalation, inability to assess capability processes robustly

Overview

The Disciplinary and Capability domain shows a directional but limited equity signal, based on formal disciplinary processes. Local capability process data is not suitable for analysis, as there were only five cases in total, making disaggregation by protected characteristic unreliable.

Ethnic minority staff show a higher likelihood of entering formal disciplinary processes (LR ≈ 1.57), with some stronger variation across other characteristics. While absolute volumes remain low, this represents a consistent directional signal requiring ongoing monitoring and strengthened oversight.

However, given the small number of disciplinary cases overall, these differences should be interpreted as signals requiring monitoring, rather than definitive evidence of systemic bias.

Intersectional signals

Intersectional signals are weak and not reinforcing. While ethnicity shows some association with disciplinary entry, this pattern is not compounded across other characteristics and cannot be triangulated with capability data due to insufficient volume.

Some higher ratios appear for *Unknown* and *Prefer Not to Say* categories, but these are not stable across indicators and likely reflect single-case effects rather than structural inequity.

Organisational interpretation

Formal disciplinary processes in PHW appear to be used infrequently, but with some inconsistency in application across staff groups. This suggests some inconsistency in the application of disciplinary processes, with variation across multiple characteristics, requiring strengthened governance and assurance, while recognising the limitations of low-volume data.

Given the very limited capability data, the appropriate organisational response is monitoring and governance, rather than targeted intervention, while ensuring that any future increase in volume is reviewed through an equity lens.

4.6 Workplace Behaviours Domain

Equity rating	Headline finding
Minimal	Consistently low prevalence across all indicators, clear separation from national benchmark levels, absence of reinforcing or compounded disadvantage

Overview

The Workplace Behaviours domain shows a strong and positive picture, with very low reported levels of harassment, bullying, and discrimination across all three indicators. Reported experiences are substantially lower than NHS Wales benchmarks and do not indicate systemic behavioural risk.

Harassment from patients, relatives, or the public is reported by fewer than 5–6% of staff across most protected characteristics, including ethnic minority staff (4.9%) and White staff (3.9%). This represents a marked reduction compared with national averages and suggests low exposure to external harassment.

Staff-to-staff harassment remains moderate but controlled, with most groups reporting levels between 18–22%, and no consistent pattern of disproportionate exposure by ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation. While some elevated figures appear in Unknown and Prefer Not to Say categories, these are not reinforced across other indicators and are likely influenced by small subgroup sizes.

Reported discrimination is relatively uncommon, with most groups reporting single-digit to low-teen percentages, and no clear evidence of concentrated disadvantage for any protected characteristic.

Intersectional signals

Intersectional signals are weak and non-reinforcing. No protected group experiences consistently higher exposure across harassment from the public, staff-to-staff harassment, and discrimination indicators.

Some volatility appears for Unknown and Prefer Not to Say categories, but this is not stable across indicators and should not be interpreted as systemic inequity.

Overall, the data does not support an interpretation of cumulative or structural disadvantage in workplace behaviours.

Organisational interpretation

Workplace behaviours in PHW appear generally positive and well managed, with low levels of harmful behaviour and no evidence of widespread or entrenched problems. This suggests that behavioural standards are embedded in practice, and that existing prevention and response mechanisms are effective.

The organisational priority in this domain should therefore be maintenance and vigilance, rather than targeted intervention.

4.7 Workplace Safety Domain

Equity rating	Headline finding
Minimal	Near-zero incident volumes, absence of repeated or directional patterns, more reliable signal from speaking-up confidence than from harm exposure

Overview

The Wellbeing and Safety domain shows a strong and reassuring profile, with very low reported exposure to physical violence and generally positive confidence in speaking up, alongside some expected volatility in reporting figures due to small numbers.

Experience of physical violence at work is extremely low across all protected characteristics, typically below 1%, and in many categories recorded as 0%. This includes ethnic minority staff, White staff, disabled staff, and LGBTQIA+ staff. These figures are substantially lower than NHS Wales benchmarks, indicating very low exposure to physical harm in PHW.

Reporting of physical violence among those affected shows high variability, including some values at 0% or 100%. These figures are driven by very small numerators and should not be interpreted as differences in reporting culture. Importantly, there is no evidence of systematic under-reporting by any protected group.

Confidence in speaking up about concerns is moderate to strong across most characteristics, with many groups reporting levels in the 60–70% range, including ethnic minority, disabled, LGBTQIA+, and heterosexual staff. While Prefer Not to Say and Unknown groups show slightly lower confidence, this pattern is not accompanied by higher harm exposure, indicating no compounded safety risk.

Intersectional signals

There are no stable or reinforcing intersectional patterns in this domain. Differences between groups in exposure, reporting, or speaking-up confidence are not repeated consistently across indicators and are largely attributable to very small numbers of incidents.

The data therefore does not support an interpretation of cumulative or structural disadvantage in wellbeing and safety for any protected group.

Organisational interpretation

Wellbeing and safety systems in PHW appear to be operating effectively in a low-risk environment. Physical harm is rare, and staff generally report confidence in raising concerns, suggesting that both prevention and voice mechanisms are functioning well.

Given the very low incidence of harm, the appropriate organisational response is maintenance and monitoring, rather than targeted intervention. Continued attention should be paid to sustaining psychological safety, particularly for staff who choose not to disclose protected characteristics.

4.8 Workplace Conditions Domain

Equity rating	Headline finding
Moderate	Strong and consistent access to adjustments and flexibility, persistently high burnout across most groups, some small-number volatility, but stable overall patterns

Overview

The Workplace Conditions domain presents a mixed but interpretable picture, combining strong access to adjustments and flexible working with persistently high levels of pressure and burnout across much of the workforce.

Access to workplace adjustments appears appropriate and aligned with need, particularly for disabled staff, where over half report receiving adjustments (54.1%). Adjustment access is also relatively consistent across other protected characteristics, indicating that support mechanisms are functioning and accessible.

Satisfaction with opportunities for flexible working is very high across most groups, typically in the 80–85% range, and higher than NHS Wales benchmarks. This suggests that flexibility is well embedded and positively experienced, including by ethnic minority, disabled, and LGBTQIA+ staff.

However, indicators relating to pressure and sustainability show a more concerning signal. A substantial proportion of staff report feeling pressure to attend work when unwell, and burnout remains high, with over half of staff across most groups reporting burnout. While these levels are slightly lower than national averages, they still indicate that workload demands are not fully mitigated by existing support and flexibility.

Intersectional signals

Intersectional signals are present but not strongly compounded. Burnout and presenteeism are widely distributed across the workforce, rather than concentrated in a single protected group. Some higher values appear among *Prefer Not to Say* and *Unknown* categories, but these differences are not consistently reinforced across indicators and are likely influenced by small cohort sizes.

Overall, the data suggests shared workload strain, rather than structural exclusion from support.

Organisational interpretation

Workplace conditions in PHW appear supportive in design but pressured in practice. Staff can access adjustments and flexible working, but these supports are not yet translating into sustainable workloads, as reflected in continued high burnout and presenteeism.

The equity issue in this domain is therefore not access to support, but effectiveness of that support in reducing pressure, indicating a need to focus on workload management, recovery, and role design, rather than additional policy provision.

5. Preserving What Works

The analysis highlights several clear strengths that should be protected and reinforced:

- **Professional Development**: high and equitable appraisal coverage, with no meaningful gaps across protected characteristics.
- **Workplace Behaviours**: very low levels of harassment and discrimination, substantially below national benchmarks.
- **Wellbeing & Safety**: near-zero physical violence and generally strong confidence in speaking up.
- **Access to workplace adjustments and flexible working**: strong and aligned with need, particularly for disabled staff. Flexible working is consistently experienced at high levels across all staff groups.
- **Data quality and disclosure rates**: better than or comparable to NHS Wales averages, supporting reliable interpretation.

These strengths indicate that PHW has a healthy organisational culture and functioning people systems, providing a strong platform for targeted improvement in the remaining pressure points.

6. Data-Informed Opportunities for Action

The data indicates that PHW's equity profile is generally strong, with most workforce systems functioning equitably, but with clear scope for improvement in leadership progression and workload sustainability.

The most significant opportunity lies in **Leadership & Progression**. While workforce composition provides a meaningful pipeline and staff confidence in fair progression is relatively positive, appointment from shortlisting remains below parity for ethnic minority staff. Targeted action should therefore focus on recruitment conversion and senior progression consistency, including panel practice, decision transparency, and routine equity oversight at senior gateways.

In **Workplace Conditions**, the opportunity is not access to support — which is strong — but effectiveness. High levels of flexibility and adjustments are not yet translating into sustained reductions in burnout and presenteeism. Action should therefore prioritise workload management, recovery, and role design, rather than additional policy provision.

For Disciplinary & Capability, volumes remain low, but some directional differences suggest the need for continued strengthened governance, assurance, and routine review of disciplinary decision-making, particularly as workforce composition changes over time.

Other domains **— Professional Development, Workplace Behaviours, and Wellbeing & Safety** — are largely areas of strength, where the primary task is maintenance, monitoring, and resilience, rather than redesign.

7. What Success Would Look Like

Success for PHW would be characterised by greater consistency and resilience at leadership decision points, alongside improved sustainability of working experience.

Leadership & Progression: success would mean that shortlisted ethnic minority candidates are appointed at rates closer to parity, and that senior progression pathways become more predictable and transparent, reducing reliance on discretionary judgement.

Workplace Conditions: success would be reflected in lower burnout and reduced pressure to work when unwell, indicating that flexibility and adjustments are effectively mitigating workload pressure, not compensating for it.

Across other domains, success would primarily involve sustaining current strong performance, ensuring that low harm, high voice, and equitable development remain resilient as PHW evolves.

Overall, success would not require parity across every metric, but would be defined by narrowing gaps, consistent direction of travel, and sustainable staff experience.

8. What Next

The WES organisational report sits at the midpoint of the NHS Wales planning and assurance cycle. This report should be used as a structured equity diagnosis, to informs IMTP planning and refinement of organisational strategic equality priorities. These priorities will translate into delivery plans and tested through SEP assurance meetings and mid-year assessment (October). Findings will be reported through the governance process to Boards and Welsh Government, enabling scrutiny of both progress and impact. As the cycle repeats annually, this creates a continuous feedback loop—linking data, planning, delivery, and assurance—ensuring sustained governmental oversight, accountability, and progressive improvement in workforce equity outcomes.

