

Reporting Committee	Welsh Kidney Network (WKN)
Chaired by	Chair, Welsh Kidney Network (WKN)
Lead Director	Melanie Wilkey, Director of Specialised Commissioning Services
Date of last meeting	18th February 2025

Summary of key matters considered by the Committee and any related decisions made.

This report provides assurance to the Joint Commissioning Committee (JC) in accordance with the Welsh Kidney Network (WKN) Terms of Reference (ToR), which states that the Chair of the WKN will provide reports to the Committee following WKN meetings outlining the activities of the Network and bringing attention to any significant matters under consideration by the Network. Board minutes are available on request from the WKN Coordinator: Jonathan.Matthews@wales.nhs.uk.

1. STRATEGIC NETWORK ISSUES

WKN Terms of Reference

As part of the annual review of the WKN Terms of Reference (ToR), minor amendments were agreed. It was acknowledged that the outcome of the Governance review, during February and March 2025, may further influence the content of the ToR. Interviews have commenced as part of the Governance review timetable.

Medicines Management Workstream

As a key strategic area agreed for the WKN Board, there were a number of updates by the WKN Pharmacy lead relating to Medicines Management. Highlighted below are a summary of previous and current achievements and the longer-term strategic objectives:

- Successful in repatriation of drugs used for kidney disease from Primary Care to Secondary Care, enabling all Wales contracts, resulting in economy of scales realising £5 million every year.
- Proactive in switching patients from branded drugs to Eculizumab biosimilar equivalent, the full year effect savings from 2024-25 is over £1.3 million.
- Drug commissioning and funding pathways, clarity for new and existing drugs across Nephrology and Transplantation modalities.
- Developing and reviewing NWJCC policy position statements.
- Influencing wider medicine management teams to introduce new drugs into routine clinical practice across Wales.
- Introduced medication review on admission, during hospital stay, at discharge and post discharge for patients with kidney disease.

- All Wales roll out of Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (ePMA) system on Vital Data as part of the Welsh Government digital transformation funds, now business as usual.
- Working in conjunction with the NWJCC Medicines Optimisation Unit and all Wales Medicines Value Unit to horizon scan and find further efficiencies.

The Board recognised the huge amount of work the pharmacists have undertaken behind the scenes in negotiating with the pharmaceutical companies and keeping prices down. Significant savings have been made in the past and this work is the reason the WKN have not faced huge cost pressures over the past ten years. It was also acknowledged that it is becoming harder to realise savings due to the law of diminishing returns.

Dialysis Unit Expansion – South West Wales

SBUHB have received a list of pre-construction conditions subject to planning approval for the planned location of the Neath Port Talbot site, one of which is a ground survey due to it having been a textile manufacturing site in the past. The survey will determine if there is any ground contamination. This further delay is anticipated to move the open date to the first or second week of January 2026.

Samples have been submitted to Rhondda Geotechnical, who have analysed the sample and were due to provide a report to the ecology officer in the Council on the 3rd March 2025.

WKN Risk Register

There are in total **5** risks on the current Welsh Kidney Network Commissioning risk register for the reporting period. With no reportable movement.

There is 1 commissioning risk with a score above 15 and remains on the JCC Commissioning Risk Assurance Framework (CRAF):

- WKN 18 Renal Capacity across Wales (16).

This risk forms part of the JCC's annual IMTP 2025/2026 submission.

Financial Plan

Approximately half of the £4.7 million devolved budget, under the WKN's discretionary control, has been assigned to NHS England contracts. English units, with which we hold contracts with, are currently underperforming, this is partly due to low transplant numbers in NHS England.

Financial risks, including additional drug costs in West Wales and some of posts, which are being funded on a non-recurrent basis in the South East and North, are being offset by the underperformance of the English contracts.

The main cost pressures are consumer price index (CPI) inflation uplifts each year within contracts and growth in dialysis, which is currently 3.7% across Wales.

These cost pressures have been included within the WKN's Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) submission for 2025-2026, which covers dialysis growth (home and unit) and CPI.

Welsh Government update

The Welsh Government Policy lead thanked members involved leading up to the Cabinet Secretary's recent visit to the Bridgend Dialysis unit on the 6 February 2025.

The Welsh Government plan to request Networks to review existing Quality Statements. This will entail a sense check, ensure consistency and that they remain accurate. The Network will be contacted to review the Quality Statement for Kidney Disease, once there is further clarity on the process.

The Welsh Government are seeking to support Local Authority Housing Departments to learn from the best practice in relation to Home Dialysis in North Wales and encourage consistency across Wales. A letter has been issued to all Regional Partnership Boards notifying them of the challenges faced by people living with kidney disease seeking housing and were asked to engage with the WKN and Local Authorities to explore the North Wales experience and collaboration.

The existing Housing Code is likely to be revised in the near future. This will be an opportunity to ensure that kidney disease is duly considered as a medical condition and that all medical conditions are appropriately weighted in proportion to other factors when making housing decisions.

2. ISSUES REPORTED FROM REGIONS

South East Wales Region

- Additional theatre capacity for vascular access has been acquired, which commenced in January 2025. It is too early to report on the impact of the additional theatre list at this time.
- The recent financial measures that have been implemented at CVUHB over the past four weeks are quite significant and have brought a significant draw on some of the management resource within the team. The impact of this needs to be understood.
- Operational challenges continue as a result of implementing the Infection Prevention & Control (IP&C) measures recommended for patients confirmed as having the multi-resistant Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO). Further discussions are being held with Public Health Wales, supported by the WKN, to gain all Wales guidance for Regions.

South West Wales Region

- Following a further meeting with the Service Director at SBUHB, plans have been implemented for vascular scanning, interventional radiology and reducing theatre lists. The team will continue to work directly with the Vascular Access lead to ensure improvements are realised.

- SBUHB continue to discuss the additional capacity required in the SLA with Hywel Dda for patients with kidney disease.
- Following the opening of the new unit in Bridgend, plans are being developed in order to remove the twilight service at Morriston.

North Wales Region

- The proposal from JCC on moving from a block contract to a cost and volume contract continues to sit with the Interim Executive Director of Finance at BCUHB for approval. Proposed start dates have been further delayed whilst awaiting a response.
- The Welshpool unit moved to a 6 day service from the 7th January 2025, which has produced much needed additional capacity. A draft SLA with Powys UHB has been developed to reflect the service change.
- Long waiting times for Vascular services in the East of the North Wales Region persist. This has been escalated internally, a meeting has been arranged for the services to discuss solutions in March 2025.
- BCUHB advised that a donation of £300,000 had recently been bequeathed to support dialysis services in the North Wales Region. The team are developing plans to create much needed additional capital.

Highlight Reports

The following highlight reports and/or updates were received at the Network Board meeting:

- WKN Central Team report including Lead Nurse
- South West Wales (SBUHB) Highlight Report
- North Wales (BCUHB) Highlight Report
- South East Wales (CVUHB) Highlight Report
- New Cross Party Kidney Group
- Popham Support
- Kidney Care UK Highlight Report
- Kidney Wales Highlight Report
- Medicines Management Highlight Report
- Pharmacy/Innovation Highlight Report
- Transplant and Vascular Access Clinical Lead Highlight Report
- Transplant and Vascular Access Clinical Data Highlight Report
- AKI Highlight Report
- Health and Wellbeing Professionals Highlight Report
- Home Dialysis Highlight Report
- Welsh Government update

Matters requiring Committee level consideration and/or approval

None

Matters referred to other Committees

None

Date of next meeting

April 2025