

Reporting Committee	Welsh Kidney Network (WKN)
Chaired by	Chair, Welsh Kidney Network (WKN)
Lead Executive Director	Melanie Wilkey, Director of Specialised Commissioning Services
Date of last meeting	16th April 2025

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

This report provides assurance to the Joint Commissioning Committee (JCC) 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

The WKN is responsible for commissioning transplantation and dialysis and in some Regions vascular access. Although the WKN also has the following responsibilities, strategy, planning, commissioning, collaboration, procurement, and prevention. This strategic approach addresses the whole patient pathway in line with the Quality Statement for Kidney Disease and enables the WKN to look at upstream measures in order to attempt to reduce the rising need for dialysis. The WKN Strategic areas are prevention, Chronic Kidney Disease care, kidney Transplant, Home Dialysis, Unit Dialysis, and Conservative Management / Palliative Care.

1.1 Welsh Kidney Network Integrated Work Plan 2024-2027:

An integrated, multi-year work plan has been developed with the Clinical Leads. The plan is aligned with the NWJCC strategic objectives and the IMTP, it also incorporates the WKN's wider responsibilities for the whole pathway. Progress and delivery of the work plan will be monitored at the WKN Board.

1.2 Highlights from Strategic Areas:

Acute Kidney Injury (AKI)

The newly developed all Wales AKI Guidelines are now published on the WKN website for all to access.

In collaboration with the Hospital and Critical Care subgroup the draft Safe Transfer Guidance has been developed.

AKI workstreams are as follows:

- Development of an AKI Health Pathways, with a view of replicating the work within the prevention workstream for Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD).
- Collaboration with Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) to develop an all Wales standardised AKI reporting tool.
- Analysis on how effective AKI alerts are in Wales
- Collaboration with Powys Teaching Health Board on a targeted Prevention and AKI project in Primary Care.

Prevention

Through the influence of the WKN Clinical Lead for Prevention and pharmacy colleagues, a huge step forward has been made within the prevention workstream. The national Primary Care Quality Improvement Programme (QIP) will now contain the early identification of CKD as a mandatory component of the new GMS contract for all GP practices in Wales. A formal announcement by Welsh Government is expected on 30/04/2025. DHCW will be updating Primary Care portals enabling identification of target populations and improvement metrics by practice/cluster/Health Board.

Underpinning this work are changes to educational and information access portals:

- CKD Health Pathways – supports GP and hospital clinicians to make informed decisions with patients at point of care.
- Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) CKD e-module focusing on screening and optimisation of early CKD with aim of CPD-approved.
- Spotlight education session in May 2025 to promote CKD National Prescribing Indicators: SGLT2I in Diabetic Kidney Disease (DKD) and non-DKD

The prevention focus for 2025 is to improve urine albumin to creatinine ratio (ACR) screening rates across Wales in all high risk groups. Improving screening rates will facilitate early detection of kidney disease and allow appropriate lifestyle changes or use of cost-effective drug treatment to slow the progression of chronic kidney disease that requires Kidney Replacement Therapy. Discussions are underway with industry partners, Public Health Wales (PHW) and Primary Care Networks (PCN) pharmacy leads to devise a strategy. A working group has been set up in ABUHB, in collaboration with the Diabetes Network and PHW, funded by Value in Health Care, to tackle this in Diabetic Kidney Disease.

Home Therapies

There are varying levels of performance between the three Regional providers, discussions continue through Regional meetings regarding improving home therapy rates, and improvement plans requested, where applicable.

Kidney Transplantation

The WKN Clinical Lead for Transplantation and Vascular Access provided an overview on the current raw activity numbers for transplantation, which suggests the trajectory for transplant numbers will surpass pre-pandemic activity levels in Wales. The formalised published report from NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) will be due May/June 2025 and reported to the next WKN Board. This will include comparative data between centres and nations.

The Nephrology and Transplant team, with the support of the existing Tier 3 Loss Management service within Cardiff & Vale University Health Board are developing a multi-disciplinary service to provide GLP-1 agonists (e.g. Tirzepatide or Semaglutide) for patients to support weight loss and enable live donor transplantation.

1.3 Financial Strategy

Members of the Board were updated on the financial settlement for 2025/2026. The proposed funding for growth, as part of the initial NWJCC Foundation Plan 2025/2026, has been reduced from 3.7%, as requested by the WKN, to 1.77%. As a consequence, there will be a number of service and financial risks moving into 2025/2026. These will be added to the WKN's risk register for April 2025:

- Inability to increase haemodialysis capacity based on the predicted demand.
- Financial sustainability for BCUHB if the cost and volume proposal, submitted by the JCC to the BCUHB, is not approved.
- Unexpected increase in activity within the donor matching lab within the Welsh Blood Service.

To mitigate the impact of these risks, work will progress with NHS Wales and NHS England providers to improve the detail and financial transparency for the information provided on the WKN commissioned services, within the Long Term Agreements (LTAs) and regular Provider/Commissioner meetings.

1.4 WKN Risk Register

There are in total **6** risks on the current Welsh Kidney Network Commissioning risk register for the reporting period.

There is **1 new risk** in this reporting period. WKN 22 - Management of Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteriaceae / Carbapenemase Producing Organism (CPE/CPO) for kidney patients in Wales. CPE/CPO is a group of bacteria (germs), e.g. E. coli, Klebsiella and Enterobacter, which are very resistant to antibiotics.

The risk rating is currently at **9 (Moderate risk)**.

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 (Unit and Home Dialysis) **16 (Major risk)**.

The risk formed part of the JCC's annual IMTP 2025/2026 submission and will be reviewed in line with the outcome of the IMTP Foundation Plan as detailed in the Finance section earlier in the report (Request for 3.7% growth reduced to 1.77%).

1.5 Commissioning Policies and Service Specifications

The Commissioning Policy and Service Specification for Vascular Access Services for adults requiring Haemodialysis is out for consultation, the closing date is 17th April 2025. The Home Therapies Service Specification has been drafted, which has been disseminated to a small group of Home Therapies Lead Nurses and Medics for comment with a view of issuing through the NWJCC Consultation process in Quarter 1.

1.6 Communication and Engagement

The [Welsh Kidney Network Website](#) home page has been rebranded and updated in line with the NWJCC format. Patient and Carers information is being further developed in conjunction with key stakeholders including the Kidney Charities. The [Healthcare Professionals page](#) is now live which includes the All Wales Acute Injury (AKI) guidelines and links to NICE Guidelines and UK Kidney Association Clinical Practice guidelines. Governance for content is in line with the NWJCC.

1.7 Highlights from Kidney Charities

- Kidney Care UK
 - [Kidney Support and Welfare Wales](#) project, co-developed with WKN and Wales and West Utilities, providing welfare and benefits support for adults on unit dialysis and home therapies is yielding significant results. In-depth engagement with over 2,012 patients, with financial gains identified of £804K and financial gains realised of £390K.
 - Awareness campaign 'Bloody Amazing Kidneys'. 170,000 people have completed the [Kidney Health Checker](#), with approximately half identified as being at increased risk of developing kidney disease. Kidney Care UK followed up with some of those who were identified as being at increased risk, 55% responded by telling them they had been to see their GP and been tested for CKD and were either awaiting results, had received a CKD stage 1-3 diagnosis or had received a CKD 4-5 diagnosis.
- Kidney Wales have increased funding into the following areas for 2025/2026:
 - Funding for NHS Equipment increased from £10K to £30K
 - £30,000 allocated to financial assistance grants
 - £24,000 allocated to well-being food vouchers, with vouchers rising from £150 to £200 per application
- Popham Kidney Support are planning to increase their volunteer peer mentors from 28 to 36 throughout Wales. They also plan to increase their

Kidney Cafes from 6 to 10. They have also been rewarded the prestigious Kings Award for Voluntary Service.

2. HIGHLIGHTS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORTED BY REGIONS

2.1 South East Wales Region:

- C&VUHB Executives have supported the expansion of the Nephrology ward in UHW to allow greater spacing for patients and reduce IP&C risks. Capacity for inpatients will remain static at this point.

2.2 South West Wales Region:

- New Dialysis Unit at Neath Port Talbot Update: All necessary documents and soil samples have been submitted to the council to discharge the pre-start conditions. Site setup is anticipated to begin on April 17th, with construction expected to take 44 weeks from commencement.

2.3 North Wales Region:

- WKN/JCC has agreed over performance with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) for 2024-25. It is hopeful that the Executive Finance Director will agree the cost and volume proposal for 2025-26. The reduced funding for growth to 1.77%, is a risk for BCUHB and the JCC in 2025-26.

3. HIGHLIGHTS AND EXCEPTIONS REPORTS:

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

- 3.4 WKN Team Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.5 WKN Lead Nurse Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.6 South West Wales (SBUHB) Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.7 North Wales (BCUHB) Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.8 South East Wales (CVUHB) Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.9 New Cross Party Kidney Group
- 3.10 Popham Support and Exceptions
- 3.11 Kidney Care UK Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.12 Kidney Wales Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.13 Medicines Management Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.14 Pharmacy/Innovation Highlight and Exceptions Report
- 3.15 Transplant and Vascular Access Clinical Lead Highlight and Exceptions Report

3.16 Transplant and Vascular Access Clinical Data Highlight and Exceptions Report 3.17 AKI Highlight and Exceptions Report 3.18 Health and Wellbeing Professionals Highlight and Exceptions Report 3.19 All Wales Clinical Lead including Home Dialysis Highlight and Exceptions Report 3.20 Procurement update	
Matters requiring Committee level consideration and/or approval	
None	
Matters referred to other Committees	
None	
Date of next meeting	June 2025