

**Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol Grŵp Iechyd, Gofal Cymdeithasol a'r  
Blynyddoedd Cynnar / Prif Weithredwr GIG Cymru**

**Director General Health, Social Care & Early Years Group / NHS  
Wales Chief Executive**



**Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government**

NHS Wales Chief Executives

20<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Colleagues

### **NHS Wales Planning Framework 2025-28: Supporting Governance Arrangements**

You will be aware that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care has written to your organisation's Chair setting out the NHS Wales Planning Framework for 2025-28: *Working together to transform services*. I am now writing to confirm the supporting process and governance arrangements. I am also pleased to be able to write to you following the recent publication of the refreshed 'A Healthier Wales' actions, as it is important these are reflected in your planning going forward, as well as the need to demonstrate prevention throughout organisations' plans. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 continues to set the context and requirements, including prevention, in which organisations operate.

All health boards and NHS trusts have a statutory duty to produce an Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP), which sets out how they will secure compliance with their break-even duty over a rolling three-year accounting period, while improving the health of the people for whom they are responsible and the provision of healthcare to such people. You must also continue to plan for the longer term and to support delivery in line with your strategic objectives and clinical services/ organisational strategies.

IMTPs will need to follow the familiar formula for the three-year plans with 'Firm, Indicative and Outline' levels of detail and a clear progression over time. Submissions should therefore include a narrative three-year plan, and completion of the Ministerial templates. This must align to the Minimum Data Set (MDS) which also underpins the development of plans. The narrative three-year plan should set out what has been delivered, what has been progressed and what was unable to be delivered from the previous submission. Year one of your plans must contain a level of detail that provides clarity on milestones, actions and projections that set the ambition for operational delivery and management of risk for the year ahead, along with financial sustainability. For clarity, I expect Boards to ensure all opportunities are fully explored to enable organisations to deliver the priorities in line with allocated resources and in a sustainable way going forward. Boards must fully understand and set out any risks to delivery of the plans and have mitigations identified prior to

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submission of plans. This will help us with the assessment of plans, together with supporting the Cabinet Secretary in making early decisions about plan approvals.

You will have seen the key strategic priorities set out by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, which are supported by a number of delivery expectations and mandated enabling actions for year 1 of your plans. These priorities, expectations and actions must be central to year one plans with resources clearly identified and committed. The Framework is clear that these are the top priorities plans need to focus on, but do not exclude the wider range of services NHS organisations still need to commission and/or provide to improve the health of their populations within the resources available. The HSCEY Planning Team will share technical guidance on the development of plans with NHS planners in due course and will engage with your organisations as you finalise your plans.

As in previous years, quality, safety and the reduction of health inequalities within and across communities must continue to underpin NHS planning. Evidencing the approaches being taken across these areas need to be set out in the narrative three-year plans. Quality and equity are important threads running through all service and care provision that organisations will want to demonstrate. Your Anti Racism Action Plans should continue to address employment and service delivery as a specific part of your wider approach to equality, inclusion and diversity. The Duty of Quality in particular places a requirement on all of us, as individuals and organisations, and we must take into account the 12 Health and Care Quality Standards when making decisions and planning services. This framing will also be used in the assessment of plans.

## **Financial Planning**

You will recognise that since the Welsh Government mid-year budget in 2023/24 and initial setting of target control totals for health boards, along with the significant investment made in the NHS in 2024/25, that delivering improvements in financial terms, and delivering sustainable financial positions is a priority for NHS bodies.

I want to see greater progress towards delivery and efficiency of services within available resources. We need to see greater financial improvement at pace, alongside other priorities, as you work to achieving financial balance. We will provide further detail of the allocation and budgetary framework for the NHS for 2025/26 alongside this letter.

Continued scrutiny, nationally and locally, on financial management is central to ensuring that progress continues to be made by organisations in driving down financial risk. Please ensure that there are mechanisms in place to consistently align and understand the impact of any financial or workforce decisions on the delivery of plans.

The continued challenges of the financial environment are well understood and therefore maximising all opportunities for transformation, utilising new technologies that create efficiency, productivity and improved patient experience and outcomes must be delivered. The priority focus areas are captured as the enabling actions that must be implemented as outlined in the planning framework. The rollout of digital solutions continues to be a part of our future service provision and must be accelerated where it is possible to do so within available resources. I will be ensuring the Value & Sustainability Board agenda nationally continues with the good progress we are making and focusses on the key priorities and expectations set out by the Cabinet Secretary. Organisations must develop plans locally that deliver on these requirements.

## Integrated arrangements

The new Performance Framework will be issued shortly and will reflect the range of key performance information that complements the Minimum Data Set (MDS), that you will provide alongside your narrative three-year plans.

The Cabinet Secretary will require Ministerial templates setting out the delivery of year 1 commitments against each of the key strategic priorities, aligned to your plans to accompany the submission.

NHS plans must continue to be underpinned by collaboration across health board and public sector boundaries and for example ensure they are aligned to Cluster, Pan Cluster Planning Group (PCPG) and Regional Partnership Board (RPB) plans. Regional planning between health boards is also a key requirement. I expect to see tangible commitments to regional delivery in your plans.

There are legislative requirements that need to be considered in your planning. These being:

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides Wales with groundbreaking legislation that places a statutory duty on public services to ensure that we make the best decisions that address the here and now as well as the future. It provides the overarching context for *A Healthier Wales* (including the refreshed actions) and the driver for better health outcomes going forward. To give current and future generations a good quality of life we need to think about the long-term impact of the decisions we make. While this provides clear challenges, the opportunities are immense. Using the sustainable development principle and the five ways of working, as part of our governance and decision making, we can create the environment in which populations can thrive.

Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 – complements the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and will require NHS bodies to consider the new social partnership requirements when taking specified actions, including the setting or revising of their wellbeing objectives in light of the new requirements. The NHS is already a leader in social partnership and procurement and much of the legislation will already be familiar. The link to key information is attached [Social Partnership and Public Procurement \(Wales\) Act | GOV.WALES](#)

The [Health Service Procurement \(Wales\) Act](#) gained royal assent in February 2024 and the regulations to introduce the [Provider Selection Regime Wales](#), or PSR Wales, will give the NHS Wales and local authorities in Wales the ability to implement more flexible procurement practices when sourcing services provided as part of the health service in Wales. Subject to the Senedd's agreement of draft regulations, it is proposed that the PSR Wales will commence on the 24 February 2025.

The Duty of Quality and Duty of Candour came into effect in April 2023. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure we are delivering safe quality services. We need to keep in mind the 12 'Health and Care Quality Standards'. Similarly, the series of Quality Statements that have been issued by Welsh Government, offer strong guiding principles on what 'good services' should aspire to, and boards must satisfy themselves that they have achieved the right balance in their planning.

## Timetable for submission

The plan submission is due by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. Welsh Government will support early assessment and decisions on plans to help ensure that there is no pause in the delivery of key priority areas. Accountability conditions and escalation status already in place will remain extant until any further communication is made.

You will be required to submit an Accountable Officer letter to me by 14 February 2025 if your organisation is unable to produce a balanced IMTP. It will be clear at this point whether the organisation will have breached its statutory duty which may lead to further required actions and potentially escalation.

The escalation status of your organisation, that has been confirmed recently, and specifically alignment with any de-escalation criteria (where applicable) will need to be reflected in your plans. Colleagues within the NHS Executive should support your actions where appropriate.

**By 14 February 2025 - Accountable Officer letter (if appropriate)**

**By 31 March 2025 – Plan, Ministerial templates and MDS submission, including the financial templates.** Earlier submissions will be welcomed.

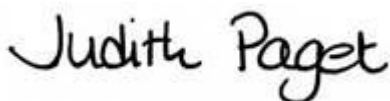
Please note the Ministerial template and MDS template will be circulated to your Directors of Planning in due course.

In addition to publishing your Board approved plans, each organisation is asked to develop a short video summarising what your plan will deliver, which can be shared with your stakeholders on your websites and social media channels.

Thank you for your leadership and support for these crucial strategic and operational planning arrangements. A secure and planned system is essential to deliver the improvements we all want to see, and I look forward to receiving your plans in March.

If you have any questions, please contact Samia Edmonds, Director of Strategic Planning who will provide further details if required and will continue to liaise with NHS Directors of Planning.

Yours sincerely



**Judith Paget CBE**

cc: Nick Wood, Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Wales  
Samia Edmonds, Director of Strategic Planning  
Hywel Jones, Director of Finance  
Jeremy Griffith, Director of Operations