Valuing, Engaging and Delivering: A health and care system for future generations

The Welsh NHS Confederation's calls for the 2021 Welsh Parliament / Senedd Cymru elections

NHS Wales

NHS Wales delivers services through seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and one Special Health Authority.

Local Health Boards

The seven Local Health Boards are responsible for planning and securing the delivery of primary, community and secondary care services alongside specialist services for their areas. These services include dental, optical, pharmacy and mental health services. They are also responsible for delivering services in partnership, improving physical and mental health outcomes, promoting wellbeing and reducing health inequalities across their population.

The seven Local Health Boards are:

1. Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
2. Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
3. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
4. Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
5. Hywel Dda University Health Board
6. Powys Teaching Health Board
7. Swansea Bay University Health Board
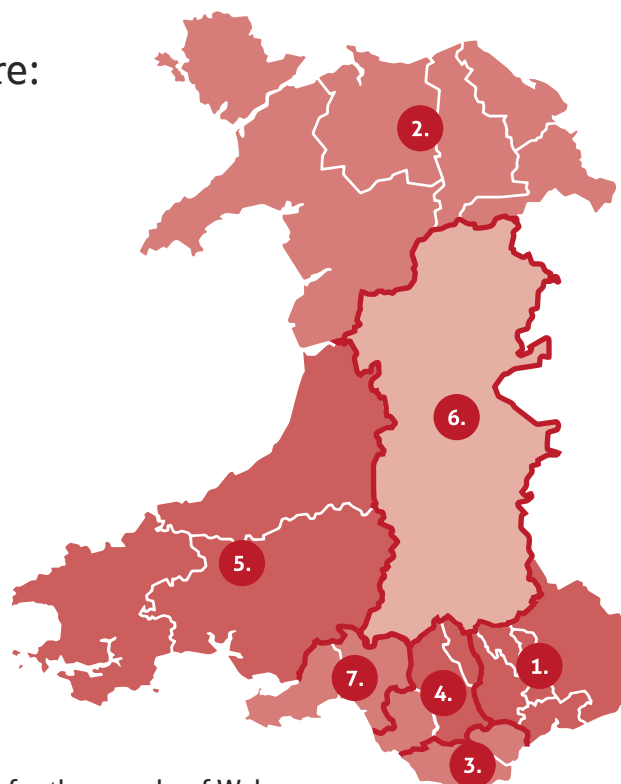
NHS Trusts

There are three NHS Trusts with an all-Wales focus.

- **Public Health Wales NHS Trust** is the national public health agency that works to protect and improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities for the people of Wales.
- **Velindre University NHS Trust** provides specialist cancer service across South and Mid Wales through Velindre Cancer Centre and a national service through the Welsh Blood Service.
- **Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust** provides a range of out-of-hospital, emergency and non-emergency services.

Special Health Authority

- **Health Education and Improvement Wales** has a leading role in the education, training, development and shaping of the healthcare workforce across Wales.

Introduction

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only membership body that represents all the organisations that make up the NHS in Wales: the seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales.

Ahead of the Senedd elections in 2021 we've sought the views of our members and set out their vision for the health and care system in Wales. This briefing puts forward our calls for the election and how political parties, the electorate and our partners can come together to address the key challenges facing the health and care system and deliver on the vision put forward by NHS leaders. To do this, we need to value the workforce, engage the public and deliver system-wide services.

As part of developing our calls, we carried out a survey in December 2019 with our members - NHS leaders from across Wales, including Chairs, Vice Chairs, Chief Executives and Executive Directors - to identify what matters to them.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that health and social care would be a central topic ahead of the Senedd election. As highlighted in the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales, the health and care system in Wales, like the rest of the UK, faces many challenges. In our election survey, members identified the following main challenges for the NHS in Wales:

- Recruitment and retention of the workforce;
- A lack of integration between health and social care;
- The need to support an ageing population;
- Finance and cost pressures; and
- Challenges around the pace of service change and redesign.

Despite these challenges, there are numerous enablers and solutions that NHS leaders put forward to achieve transformational service change, including:

- Continuing to implement the long-term vision for health and social care as recommended within the Parliamentary Review;
- Working collaboratively across organisational boundaries;
- Delivering compassionate leadership across all sectors;
- Developing population and wellbeing outcomes across health and social care;
- Having a long-term financial plan for health and social care;
- Achieving clinical and public support for change; and
- Establishing governance arrangements to enhance regional and national decision making.

Many of these solutions have already become evident from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has changed the NHS and social care, ushering in rapid transformation at a time of immense pressure and personal and professional challenge. The pandemic will have significant impact on the future of the population, society and services. In addition, this will be the first Senedd election with the UK out of the European Union, which will mark a very different international relationship and political landscape.

In the lead up to the Senedd election, it is important to have a constructive debate around the solutions required to further implement the vision for the health and care system. We call for all political parties and candidates to play a leadership role and ensure the debate focuses on quality-based outcomes, prevention, community services and whole-system collaboration.

Everyone in Wales wants a sustainable and viable health and care system that is fit for the future. The Welsh NHS Confederation will continue to represent the views of our members in the debate and we look forward to working with all political parties and candidates.

Our Vision

A health and care system fit for the future should...

Invest in supporting and maintaining health, wellbeing and independence in communities

Provide person-centred care that is compassionate and joined-up across sectors

Support, empower and inform people to take responsibility for their health and shape their own care around their needs, ensuring they are involved in decision-making

Listen to and learn from the experiences of patients, their carers and staff and be accountable to the public

Continually improve quality and safety, engage and equip staff to work in new ways and embrace innovation and new technologies

Reduce inequalities in people's health, eliminate discrimination and value mental and physical health equally

Have a motivated, engaged and valued healthcare workforce, with the capacity, competence and confidence to meet the needs of the people of Wales

Create social value in local communities to provide improvements in health, the environment and prosperity

Use resources responsibly, efficiently and fairly to ensure sustainable services

Be outward facing, working with the wider world to ensure economic partnerships, investment, research and promote Wales across the globe

Delivery

To deliver our vision, all political parties' election manifestos should focus on:

Promoting health: Commit to population health improvement working across sectors, focusing on preventative action and supporting healthy behaviours and environments for the next generation

Publishing an action plan: Delivering joined up models of care based on individuals' needs within the first six months of a new Government

The big conversation: Implement a Government-wide national programme and engagement strategy to support the public to live healthier lives, take more responsibility for their health and wellbeing, manage their conditions and use services responsibly

Social care: Introduce social care services based on individual's needs

Integrated public services: Introduce joint inspection, regulatory regimes and governance arrangements to support regional and national decision-making to drive cross sector change

Measuring performance: Introduce performance measures that focus on quality-based outcomes, prevention, community services and whole-system collaboration

Workforce planning: Provide a multi-professional, digitally enabled, motivated, engaged and valued workforce whose own wellbeing is prioritised and promoted

Shared vision for digital and technology: Introduce new technology and innovation to support inclusion, service change and improve data quality across the system

Resource framework: Develop a 5-year investment plan in service change to reshape the NHS estates and infrastructure, making them more sustainable, reducing carbon emissions and maximising public assets

Public sector for the public: Publish priorities to improve public sector working at all levels, with a focus on compassion, quality improvement, shared values and trust across the system

The challenges facing the NHS

We believe there are ten key challenges that face our health and care services, all of which have been exacerbated by the direct and indirect effects of COVID-19.

Demand: Meeting the rising demand for care, particularly from people with complex needs or long-term conditions, while maintaining people's wellbeing and preventing ill health for as long as possible. Ensuring NHS services resume in the most appropriate way when working alongside and responding to COVID-19.

Workforce: Promoting staff wellbeing, delivering agile and improved ways of working for staff and planning for a sustainable and resilient workforce to better match changing demand and more digitally delivered services. Developing staff roles and skills to provide complex, multi-disciplinary, co-ordinated care in partnership with individuals, other sector partners and communities.

Financial: Recognising the financial pressures on all parts of the system and getting value from every penny of public money spent on health and care. Being open and honest in the debate on the future levels and sources of funding for health and social care and recognising the crucial role health services play in local economies and communities.

Leaving the EU: Understanding the wider societal, economic and environmental impact and opportunities leaving the EU may have for population health and wellbeing and the recruitment of international health and social care staff.

Integration of health and social care: Focusing on partnership and collaborative working across all sectors so care revolves around the needs and capacities of individuals, families and communities. The need for a sustainable social care system and a fundamental shift in how we think about social care.

Population health: Addressing the social, environmental and economic determinants of health and investing in prevention and early intervention to support and maintain people's wellbeing and prevent ill health. Empowering and supporting individual and community resilience to adapt and respond to challenges that impact on health and wellbeing.

Effective use of technology and digital: Using technology to help transform care and enable people to access information and treatment in a way that meets their needs and supports them to stay well. Spreading innovation to improve quality, citizen experiences and population outcomes.

Culture: Building confidence in the health and care system by achieving a shift in culture from the bottom up. Creating a more open and transparent NHS, which enables staff, patients, citizens and communities to be partners and active participants in decisions, to improve care.

Service design: Redesign services to better meet people's changing needs so that services remain sustainable in the future. This will mean empowering people, developing a strategic approach to prevention and early intervention, improving mental health and providing more care closer to home.

Health inequalities: Working across the public, private, third and voluntary sectors to better understand the determinants of health and their disproportionate impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of certain geographic, socio-economic and socio-demographic groups.

Everyone in Wales wants a sustainable and viable health and care system that is fit for the future.

Delivering our Vision

We call on all political parties' manifestos to focus on:

Promoting health:

Commit to population health improvement working across sectors, focusing on preventative action and supporting healthy behaviours and environments for the next generation.

The *Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales* highlighted how society has changed dramatically since the creation of the NHS over 70 years ago, and the key challenge now is to set out how all sectors can work together to better anticipate and address current and future demands on the system. Improving population health and supporting the prevention agenda are key priorities to achieving the change required across the whole-system to establish health promoting environments for current and future generations.

All public sector services will continue to have a role to play in creating a preventative model and collectively we need to create the economic, social and natural environment that supports good health and wellbeing throughout the life-course and reduce health inequalities. To ensure services are sustainable, it is imperative we recognise the significant impact that preventative services based in primary and community settings have on our health and wellbeing e.g. leisure centres, adult education classes, community facilities etc. There needs to be a shift of resources from treatment to prevention, although we recognise the difficulty of moving significant investment away from traditional treatment services when current demands are so great.

Wales faces several challenges relating to health behaviours that contribute to higher levels of poor health and wellbeing. For example, a significant proportion of the population continue to smoke, there are high levels of obesity, too many people drink above the low-risk alcohol guidelines, and too many people have low physical activity levels. The impact of such behaviours on our health is resulting in increased demand being placed on our health and care services. We need to co-produce with the public a cultural shift whereby we enable and support sustainable behaviour change. Collaborative and integrated working amongst public and voluntary sector professionals and organisations, including health, local government, education and the environment, is key.

While the response to COVID-19 has been a priority since March 2020, we cannot hold back on confronting challenges such as the climate emergency. The pandemic has resulted in some positive impacts on the environment due to the decline in planned travel causing many regions across the world to experience a drop in air pollution and carbon emissions. We must learn from these positive impacts to ensure there is lasting change that will improve health and wellbeing in Wales.

✏️ Publishing an action plan:

Delivering joined up models of care based on individuals' needs within the first six months of a new Government.

There is no quick fix to remedy the challenges that face the NHS and social care, but there is an agreed direction of travel laid out in the *Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales.* The Parliamentary Review called for a 'revolution from within' and put forward a recommendation to have a clear and simple long-term vision of what a seamless system, with care organised around the individual as close to home as possible, should look like in the future.

This recommendation received support from all political parties and from health and social care leaders in Wales. The vision set out within the Parliamentary Review, and introduced through A Healthier Wales, continues to be implemented and supported by NHS leaders, with 88% of our members agreeing that the policy direction and the long-term vision should remain post-2021.

Providing care based on individuals' needs must also value physical and mental health equally, which has again been evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic. While primarily seen as a physical health issue, COVID-19 is already having a significant impact on people's mental health, including the health and care workforce. It is anticipated that there will be an increase in demand for mental health and wellbeing services over the coming months, as both people with pre-existing mental health conditions and the general public are impacted by self-isolation, financial insecurity, bereavement, and increases in substance abuse and domestic abuse. Existing societal inequalities are also likely to be exacerbated, with certain groups being disproportionally affected.

In addition, many people will have experienced disruptions and/or delays to receiving NHS services as a result of COVID-19. To meet these needs, NHS and care partners are thinking innovatively to redesign services to deliver routine services in the future. In practice, this could mean providing more services online in a way that supports people to maintain their independence and alleviates undue pressure on hospitals and primary care services.

In addition to COVID-19, January 2021 will also be a milestone as it will mark the UK being fully removed as a member of the European Union (EU). There are a number of potential impacts for health and care services when the UK leaves the EU including; access to medicines and medical equipment; collaborating fully in research and testing of new treatments, including clinical trials; participating in key EU data-sharing platforms and alert systems for public health security purposes; and recruiting and retaining the health and care staff we need.

Currently NHS leaders are on a journey to transform health and care services and it is vital that this continues after the election. Too often, messages from political leaders suggest that key challenges can be solved easily with relatively short-term fixes or structural changes. As a result of the Parliamentary Review, the NHS and social care have a long-term vision which already sets out a clear direction and are transforming services to implement it.

The NHS belongs to us all, and as individuals, we should do what we can to ensure it is sustainable.

The big conversation:

Implement a Government-wide national programme and engagement strategy to support the public to live healthier lives, take more responsibility for their health and wellbeing, manage their conditions and use services responsibly.

To deliver on the long-term vision for health and care, developing the relationship between public services and citizens must be a priority for the next Welsh Government. There is an urgent need for a meaningful dialogue with the public about the future expectations of public services and the different role they need to play. Public support is critical to delivering and securing policy and service change. The programmes most successful in galvanising public support are those which place the public at the heart of the decision-making process, particularly when combined, if appropriate, with enabling legislation.

The relationship between the NHS and patients, their families and our diverse local communities has never been so strong due to the public's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Public understanding and support for the NHS has been remarkable, from sewing facemasks and shopping for our shielded neighbours, to a genuine sense of gratitude at the sacrifices that health and care staff continue to make on the frontline. During the pandemic, there has also been consistent communication across all public sector bodies, both in relation to accessing NHS services appropriately and in relation to high compliance rates with official guidance. The positive developments across the health and care system, in addition to the networks within the Local Resilience Forums, has enabled the public sector to reach out to communities by providing consistent information and ensuring that feedback is sought and responded to. The public's efforts throughout this difficult time has made a significant difference and it is vital that we try to maintain public confidence, trust and understanding as we manage and provide health and care services in the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic means we have an opportunity to develop more effective communication and engagement with the public and patients by developing holistic messaging across the public sector and wider partners in the third and private sector around population health and the need for service change. In addition, the language of public (and staff) engagement has historically been negatively framed around the need to make financial efficiencies, rather than the health benefits and outcomes they strive to achieve.

In our survey, NHS leaders highlighted the need for increased support in helping people make healthier choices and believed public education and improving health literacy is an effective lever to keep people active, healthy and in their own homes for longer. This, for many, will mean fundamental changes to the ways in which they live their lives. We need to empower people to become active participants in their health.

There is also a requirement for an open and honest conversation with the public about what the NHS can be expected to provide in future. While the NHS is free at the point of contact, it is not free of obligation, and the public will need to be supported in taking more responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. The NHS belongs to us all, and as individuals, we should do what we can to ensure it is sustainable.

⛎ Social care:

Introduce social care services based on individuals' needs.

It is not possible to consider the long-term future of health and social care in Wales without considering the issue of how, and to what level, the system should be funded in the future. Core NHS spending now accounts for around 50% of the current Welsh Government's revenue budget, but further funding and investment is required for social care to stabilise the services they can provide.

We need to work towards achieving a consensus that the NHS and social care services are inter-dependent. Care home sector stability is vital to our health and care system. In recent years, there have been significant pressures around capacity and demand for care services and COVID-19 has exacerbated this problem. The pandemic has once again demonstrated the need for a new settlement for social care and highlighted the critical role the sector plays in the delivery of health and care services. The challenges facing social care services include vulnerabilities in funding and market stability, the increased demand on the sector, growing unmet need, staff vacancy issues, contingency planning and the need for consistent standards and quality measures between health and social care.

There is also a growing need to provide rehabilitation to those who have had Coronavirus and who may require social care and/or psychological treatment. However, there will also be significant numbers of people who will require rehabilitative treatment due to months of self-isolation and loneliness, not least in terms of mental health support. These needs will manifest differently across the COVID-19 patient population, and wider public, and will require intervention across the entire health and care system.

Eligibility for social care services should be widened to meet the needs of an ageing population and an increasing number of younger adults living with disabilities. In response to our survey, 59% of NHS leaders believed that social care should be free at the point of need, with only 18% disagreeing. The next Welsh Government should commit to a comprehensive and sustainable plan to reform social care funding and delivery. The response should be integrated and centred on delivering the outcome that matters most to the service user in all cases.

We welcomed the call within Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and Social Care Wales' draft workforce Strategy for parity of esteem between the health and social care workforce. This is essential to achieving a sustainable and well-trained workforce and further work is required at all levels to market social care as an attractive career prospect.

Integrated public services:

Introduce joint inspection, regulatory regimes and governance arrangements to support regional and national decision-making to drive cross sector change.

To deliver on the long-term vision, we must empower the whole public sector to enable them to work seamlessly across organisational boundaries, ensuring that a streamlined and agile governance structure, leadership, outcome measures and financial support are provided.

In response to COVID-19, organisations have worked at pace to transform services and deliver care innovatively, often enabled by effective partnership working and with a different risk appetite to provide the best care for citizens. Now is the right time to empower health and care systems to drive change, with greater clarity about how we can deliver 'system by default' in ways that support partnerships and integrated services. As the health and care system moves forward and thinks in a more systematic way about population health, we must learn from emerging practice and how we should reshape governance and regulatory models to align with service transformation and ensure that we have a more agile, clinically-led, and patient-focused culture that we've seen develop in response to COVID-19 through redesigning services at pace.

Currently in Wales there are challenges with the governance arrangements around Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs) and Public Services Boards (PSBs) because they are not legal entities. Despite this, key strategic decisions, particularly around funding, are being made by RPBs. However, some partner organisations within the RPB are required to confirm with their individual organisation whether or not to fund the strategic projects agreed by the RPB. In addition, further clarity is required around the relationship between RPBs and PSBs, so that they work in an interconnected and joined-up way.

With the introduction of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, health and social care services are working in a more integrated way and it is important that there is one organisation representing the citizen's voice in both health and social care. The refreshed citizen voice arrangement through the Citizens Voice Body, introduced within the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020, will provide better assurance and the impetus for health and social care organisations to improve the way they engage with the public, work in partnership to gather views, involve citizens in planning and delivery of services and represent the interests of people who access NHS and/or social care services in Wales.

Finally, a more robust and consistent system of inspection would be welcomed so the public can be better assured about the quality and safety of services across health and social care. There is support for Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW) to be integrated with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to form a new inspectorate body.

📈 Measuring performance:

Introduce performance measures that focus on quality-based outcomes, prevention, community services and whole-system collaboration.

The current NHS targets focus too specifically on acute and secondary care and do not always support the system to grow and redesign, such as moving services into primary and community care and preventative services. In response to our survey, only 10% of NHS leaders believed the current performance measures (tier 1 targets) are sufficient measurements of health and wellbeing and patient experience.

While targets have a role to play, we must also look at the bigger picture, instigating a whole-system change in the way treatment is delivered, how services are provided and population health measured. A key driver within this is the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

The Act places an obligation on public bodies to improve our social, cultural, environmental and economic wellbeing and sets out how public bodies need to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other to prevent persistent inequalities and tackle issues such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change. However, to improve population health and wellbeing further, it is vital that meaningful person-centred performance measures and frameworks are developed across health and social care which focus on patient experience, clinical outcomes, prevention, whole-system collaboration and applying value based healthcare (which is delivering outcomes that matter most to patients for the same or lower cost).

COVID-19, and the approach to managing the pandemic, has revealed pre-existing health inequalities as well as exacerbated them. Of particular concern during COVID-19 has been the impact on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) populations, who have been disproportionately affected by the virus and have experienced higher mortality rates. In restoring services and resetting the NHS, there is an opportunity to learn how individuals, families and communities have been impacted by the pandemic and to move to a population-based approach to the planning and design of services and measuring outcomes.

To improve population health and wellbeing, it is vital that meaningful person-centred performance measures and frameworks are developed across health and social care.

Workforce planning:

Provide a multi-professional, digitally enabled, motivated, engaged and valued workforce whose own wellbeing is prioritised and promoted.

The NHS is Wales' biggest employer, currently employing over 92,000 people, and providing a significant contribution to the national and local economies. The delivery of health and social care services to the population of Wales is completely dependent on our workforce who work in a range of statutory, private and voluntary provider services. Without them, high quality health and care services could not be provided.

The health and care workforce is at the heart of how we deliver care and services to patients and their families. Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic their hard work and dedication has highlighted the extent to which they are valued by the public, but it has also highlighted a number of underlying issues which must be addressed too.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic and the end of free movement of EU/UK nationals, the workforce was widely regarded as the biggest challenge facing the NHS. Responding to our election survey, NHS leaders said recruitment, retention and capacity of the NHS workforce is the main challenge facing the NHS in Wales over the next five years. In addition, NHS leaders believed staff shortages and the availability of a skilled NHS workforce was the main barrier preventing NHS organisations from tackling the challenges it faces, with staff workload and capacity the third biggest barrier to enabling service change. The UK Government's future immigration proposals, coming into force in January 2021, may also add additional challenges to the recruitment of health and social care staff. A points-based immigration system will end the free movement of EU/ EEA nationals and could impact the ability for the Welsh NHS and social care to recruit and retain the international talent it values so much.

The recently launched HEIW and Social Care Wales draft Strategy, commissioned by Welsh Government and in partnership with NHS Wales, Local Government, private and voluntary provider services, sets out the approaches needed to put wellbeing at the heart of plans for the workforce. A core element is to deliver an inclusive, engaged, sustainable, flexible and responsive health and social care workforce. We are calling on all political parties to support the draft Strategy and the ambition that it puts forward.

This means that we will have a workforce:

- With the right values, behaviours, knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver evidence-based care, and support people's wellbeing as close to home as possible;

- In sufficient numbers to be able to deliver responsive health and social care that meets the needs of the people of Wales;

- That is reflective of the population's diversity, Welsh language and cultural identity, and

- That feels valued and is valued.

Our ambition is to achieve, by 2030, a multi-professional and multi-agency workforce model. Beyond the health and social care workforce, there are opportunities to develop the skills of other occupations to help support the wellbeing of the Welsh population. Individuals who work in local communities, such as the postal worker, the teacher, the hairdresser, volunteers and the shop assistant all have an active role to play in supporting communities to stay healthy and connected.

Shared vision for digital and technology:

Introduce new technology and innovation to support inclusion, service change and improve data quality across the system.

As highlighted in the response to COVID-19, the health and care system must continue to maximise the strategic and operational potential of digital technology as an enabler of change. Digital technology should be seen as one of the most significant strategic tools available to us to shift to a new preventative model of health and care.

Even in the face of extreme pressure placed on the NHS and care services by COVID-19, the NHS has pushed through transformational changes at a pace we have never seen before. The roll-out of the 111 service to every part of Wales at the very beginning of the pandemic, a development that was originally not scheduled for full roll-out until April 2021, has increased access to appropriate services, pointing patients to the right place, at the right time. In primary care, GP surgeries began delivering virtual appointments to patients to deliver vital care and advice, not just for potential COVID-19 patients, but also to keep other important services running throughout, particularly for those living with long-term conditions. We must build on the developments put in place during COVID-19 and harness the increased digital engagement necessitated by the pandemic, particularly amongst those who did not engage digitally in the past.

Digital technology provides a great opportunity to engage more closely with the public and patients, using social media and interactive technology to support self-care. Our workforce needs to be supported to deliver care using digital skills to manage workloads and caseloads more effectively and the Welsh language should be aligned to new approaches of service delivery.

Technology also plays a key role in improving care and making informed decisions. It can support staff to have the right information to make better decisions, through the availability of data, and to provide safer, faster care. It enables staff in different settings and citizens to share care plans so that individuals in need of care experience a joined-up service, and that patients and unpaid carers have the information they require to be empowered and involved in keeping well and accessing the right care in the right place for their individual needs.

However, we must ensure that technology is accessible to all, with no barrier to equality of opportunity, and prevent digital isolation. Not everyone has the skills to use technology and support must be made available to people. This can be done by working with partners in education and in the community to promote digital skills and prevent people from becoming further disadvantaged. Increasing people's confidence in using digital technology also supports the NHS because it enables an increasing number of people to access vital services from home. This will be particularly important as the system continues to reset services following COVID-19. Care must also be taken to mitigate against unintended consequences, such as an increase in loneliness and social isolation. The need for direct human contact and support, especially for people who are vulnerable, cannot be substituted by technology.

⚙ Resource framework:

Develop a 5-year investment plan in service change to reshape the NHS estates and infrastructure, making them more sustainable, reducing carbon emissions and maximising public assets.

While recent increases in funding have been welcomed, finances remain extremely tight. This will continue to be the case as demand on the NHS and social care continues to grow, the costs of providing care increase and the impact of an economic recession following COVID-19 is felt by Welsh communities. We are calling on all political parties to have a long-term commitment to providing sufficient resources for health and care, including a plan to reshape NHS estates and infrastructure.

For the system to be empowered and to transform, investment in NHS estates is key. In our election survey, NHS leaders cited the biggest financial challenge as being the development and maintenance of the NHS estate. Many hospitals in Wales were built in the 1960s or earlier. While there has been significant investment over the years in some areas of Wales, including the Grange University Hospital in Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and in primary care, NHS estates are often in poor shape, with significant investment needed to bring old buildings in line with modern standards, including making them energy efficient, and to improve patient experience and quality of patient care.

In relation to the impact of COVID-19 on NHS estates, the buildings and design of many hospitals make them unprepared for the kind of infection control required, the need to separate COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 patients and to maintain social distancing for patients and staff. These factors mean that NHS organisations face capacity constraints across all services, with hospitals, for example, having to run at much lower rates of occupancy than normal as services are re-modeled to

deal with the ongoing impact of COVID-19. However, opportunities presented by digital and virtual working might mean a re-evaluation of NHS estates and how the NHS engages with patients and service users in the future e.g. through further fostering agile working and more telephone and digital health engagements between health and care staff and patients/ service users.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also anticipated to leave a social and economic downturn in the future. Health services have a vital role to play in the wider recovery and rebuilding of local economies and communities – driving up prosperity and contributing to population health and wellbeing. This will involve transforming public service planning and delivery throughout a time of unprecedented economic and social disruption and pushing the NHS to understand its impact, value and responsibility as local anchor organisations (a large organisation whose long-term sustainability is tied to the wellbeing of the population through being one of the largest employers in local areas, key purchaser of goods and services, and a capital estate holder and developer). The next Welsh Government must commit to addressing these challenges and provide the necessary investment within the NHS, the wider public sector and communities as a whole, to support recovery and achieve a more sustainable future.

👥 Public sector for the public:

Publish priorities to improve public sector working at all levels, with a focus on compassion, quality improvement, shared values and trust across the system.

If the NHS is going to rise to the challenges ahead, it is vital that partnership working across all sectors is further developed to create and enable healthier lifestyles and build a service that is future-proof and leads the way in delivering the best quality care and treatment. With over 80% of our overall health and wellbeing being influenced by services outside the NHS, there is an opportunity now to reset these relationships and to regard the NHS, local government, the private and voluntary sectors, and community and social enterprise organisations as equal partners to better support people to keep well, and where appropriate, better manage their conditions. We must take joined-up models of care to the next level.

COVID-19 has led to traditional barriers to cross sector working being torn down, and we must not allow those barriers to be rebuilt in the future. In our survey, NHS leaders said they want to see a new Welsh Government publish a plan to improve partnership working across all sectors, with compassionate leadership a key focus.

The key for all of us involved in health and care services is understanding individuals' needs and putting people at the heart of our vision, which requires integration. It is about getting all parts of the system to work together so that the patient/ service user receives timely, efficient and effective care with the right outcome for them. Integrated, seamless services lead to better user satisfaction, better outcomes and when implemented effectively, makes better use of resources.

In response to our election survey, NHS leaders highlighted competing funding mechanisms, the political nature of the health and care system, the different scrutiny and accountability arrangements, and culture as being the main barriers to achieving effective integrated services in Wales.

While the health and care system is complex, given its size, structure and strong working relationships, there is plentiful evidence to suggest Wales has a golden opportunity to achieve so much when it comes to designing and delivering integrated citizen-centred services. For example, the legislative framework, particularly the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, means Wales is well-placed to put people's needs at the heart of decision-making, support people to maintain their own physical and emotional wellbeing, promote the use of preventative approaches and work collaboratively across all sectors to achieve the outcomes that matter most to them.

It also acknowledges the importance of building a culture of compassionate and inclusive leadership across the public sector, and with other sectors, which will attract, continuously support and develop a flexible and agile workforce.

The Welsh NHS Confederation
Who we are and what we do

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body that represents all the organisations making up the NHS in Wales: seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). We are also part of the NHS Confederation and host NHS Wales Employers.

As the recognised voice of the NHS leadership in Wales, we champion the health and care system through the collective strength of our membership. We are uniquely placed to work at a national level with our members and partners to help them address current challenges and shape the future health and care system in Wales.

Our three priorities are to:

• Support our members

• Facilitate system leadership

• Represent our members

Our members are:

• Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

• Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

• Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

• Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

• Health Education and Improvement Wales

• Hywel Dda University Health Board

• Powys Teaching Health Board

• Public Health Wales NHS Trust

• Swansea Bay University Health Board

• Velindre University NHS Trust

• Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust