



Welsh NHS Confederation
Confederasiwn GIG Cymru

Adapting the workforce for a sustainable future

May 2025

About us

The Welsh NHS Confederation is the only national membership body representing all the organisations making up the NHS in Wales.

We represent the seven local health boards; three NHS trusts; Health Education and Improvement Wales; and Digital Health and Care Wales. We are part of the NHS Confederation and host NHS Wales Employers.

We support our members by acting as a driving force for positive change through strong representation, facilitating system leadership and our proactive policy, influencing, communications, events and engagement work.

Introduction

A robust and sustainable workforce is the foundation of a thriving National Health Service. To achieve this, a multifaceted approach is required, encompassing both immediate and long-term strategies. Continuous investment in student education and staff training across all professional groups remains paramount, ensuring the NHS can adapt to evolving patient needs and technological advancements.

However, the NHS faces significant financial pressures related to workforce costs. High vacancy and sickness rates contribute to increased reliance on agency staff, though recent efforts have yielded a reduction in agency spending. To truly address these challenges, long-term workforce planning is essential, integrated seamlessly with service and digital redesign. A 10–15-year approach is needed to reshape care delivery and education.

From surgical teams at Ysbyty Gwynedd performing over 140 robotically assisted surgeries, to a nurse in Powys being the first ever RCN Wales Learning Disability Nurse of the Year, this briefing highlights examples of the strength and adaptability of multi-disciplinary teams in the NHS.

Whilst there are further improvements needed for the future sustainability of the NHS workforce, it is essential that best practice is shared and implemented to navigate the complex and growing demands placed on health and care services. NHS leaders have long called for the Welsh Government to invest in a fully costed long-term plan to deliver a sustainable NHS and social care workforce if we are to meet the needs of the people of Wales now and in the future.

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board

Improving employee investigations in NHS Wales

- Person-centric approach to employee investigations, resulting in 71% reduction in investigations and financial sickness savings

The "Improving our Employee Investigations" programme, a collaboration between Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and Health Education and Improvement Wales, aims to shift from disciplinary overuse to a person-centric approach. Backed by academic research, including published papers, the programme has demonstrated a 71% reduction in investigations and significant financial sickness savings in pilot programmes.

Since July 2022, over 1,000 NHS Wales staff, including managers and HR, have received training. The programme has been endorsed by the chief executive of the NHS Wales, Judith Paget, and has received seven awards, including the top NHS Wales Award. It is also informing a review of the all-Wales disciplinary policy, emphasising informal approaches and improved employee support. The programme inspired a national "Avoiding Harm" campaign and is extending its impact to local government. A new Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) award and a commissioned book further highlight its significance.

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Latest technology enhances outcomes for cancer patients

- Robotically assisted surgeries improve outcomes for cancer patients

Since introducing the Versius Robot in 2022, surgical teams in Ysbyty Gwynedd have performed over 140 robotically assisted surgeries. This technology, part of the Welsh Government's National Robotic Assisted Surgery Programme, aims to enhance outcomes for cancer patients by increasing access to minimally invasive procedures.

Robotic surgery offers numerous advantages compared to traditional open surgery, including reduced post-operative pain, faster recovery, fewer blood clots and shorter hospital stays, often by up to a day. Consultant Gynaecological Surgeon, Mr. Richard Peevor, expressed pride in the team's achievement and highlighted the opportunities to expand the use of the robot for more complex cases in the future.

Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

New leadless pacemaker improves patient outcomes

- Health board's cardiologists fit Wales' first leadless pacemaker

The 50-minute procedure, performed on a 63-year-old patient under local anaesthetic, involved implanting a small device directly into the heart via a vein. The device boasts a 17+ year battery life, double that of traditional pacemakers, and significantly reduces infection and lead-related complications. Consultant Doctor Fong Leong hailed the procedure as a milestone, emphasising the device's small size, long battery life and lack of visible scarring.

Though the leadless pacemaker costs £5,000 more than conventional pacemakers, the £50,000 funding from the health board's Value in Health Programme is projected to generate over £650,000 in annual savings through reduced hospital stays and complex therapies. The Value in Health team supports projects that improve care and achieve financial savings.

Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board

Recognition for dedication to Armed Forces Community

- Health board receives Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Silver Award 2024

Recognising its support for the armed forces community, this award acknowledged Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board (CTM) for its implementation of policies that benefit veterans and their families. The health board also has its own Staff Armed Forces network which fosters support and addresses challenges faced by veterans and their families. This network has driven workforce development, with staff receiving specific training to better serve the veteran community.

The health board has reaffirmed its commitment by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant, pledging fair treatment and employment opportunities for veterans and service families. This commitment has led to targeted workforce development, ensuring staff are equipped to meet the unique needs of the armed forces community. The health board also prioritises timely medical treatment for those with service-related conditions.

Digital Health and Care Wales

Digital nursing records now live in all hospitals across Wales

- Welsh Nursing Care Record saves time, improves accuracy and facilitates quicker, better-informed decisions

The University Hospital of Wales (UHW) in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board is the 58th and final Welsh hospital to implement the Welsh Nursing Care Record (WNCR), a digital system replacing paper notes. Nurses now use devices for bedside assessments, saving time, improving accuracy, and facilitating faster, better-informed decisions with instant access to patient data.

Since its 2021 launch, WNCR has digitally assessed over 470,000 inpatients, completed over 38 million risk assessments, and captured over 23 million nursing notes. Cardiff and Vale UHB aims to complete the WNCR rollout across all eligible wards later in 2025, marking the national rollout to 100% across all eligible wards in Wales.

Health Education and Improvement Wales

Enabling the workforce to capitalise on genomic advancements

- Genomics Strategic Workforce Plan launched

Reinforcing their commitment to delivering world-class genomic healthcare in Wales, along with Genomics Partnership Wales, Health Education Improvement Wales launched the Genomics Strategic Workforce Plan. The plan outlines an ambitious three-year roadmap to establish a sustainable workforce prepared to adapt to rapid advancements in genomics. It focuses on developing specialist genomics professionals and integrating genomics into routine NHS care.

The plan builds on existing progress, including free online foundational genomics training for all NHS Wales staff via Y Ty Dysgu. Additionally, fully funded MSc-level modules at Cardiff and Bangor Universities offer advanced training in areas like genomics of inherited and infectious diseases.

Hywel Dda University Health Board

Paediatric diabetes team improves patient outcomes and long-term health

- Hywel Dda UHB's paediatric diabetes team ranks first in Wales and third in England and Wales for key patient outcome metric

Established fifteen years ago, the paediatric diabetes team has achieved the lowest average HbA1C levels in Wales and third lowest nationally - a key indicator of blood glucose control and long-term health. The team's proactive use of technology was noted as a success factor, with high insulin pump usage and the adoption of hybrid closed-loop systems contributing to improved HbA1C levels.

Covering Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, and Pembrokeshire, the team supports approximately 200 children with Type 1 diabetes and others with Type 2 or rare genetic forms. The team conducts school visits, diabetes awareness campaigns, and educational activities, including modules for secondary school transitions, combining learning with activities, fostering peer support.

Powys Teaching Health Board

Best practice recognised for improving learning disability healthcare

- Powys nurse recognised for dedication to improving healthcare and outcomes for those with learning difficulties

Catherine Davies from Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) has won the RCN Wales Learning Disability Nurse of the Year award. Recognised for her dedication to improving healthcare for individuals with learning disabilities in Powys, her work includes educating GPs and healthcare professionals on specific support needs and driving annual health checks, achieving a 90% uptake.

Catherine, who is based at Bronllys hospital, emphasises that her achievement is a team effort aimed at reducing health inequalities and premature deaths among people with learning disabilities. Catherine also provides training to social care and ambulance service personnel, having trained over 500 learning disability champions across Wales.

Public Health Wales NHS Trust

Interactive showcase for students

- Public Health Wales' inaugural Careers Discovery Day inspires Year 10 students towards NHS careers

Partnering with Careers Wales, the event held on February 14th, 2025, featured interactive sessions including health protection simulations and VR experiences. Professionals from Public Health Wales, HEIW, and Cardiff and Vale College shared their career journeys, highlighting academic and non-academic routes into the NHS.

Students found the day "informative" and "inspiring," expressing surprise at the diverse range of public health roles. The day highlighted Public Health Wales' commitment to workforce development and community engagement, with plans to expand the event to reach a wider audience in future years.

Swansea Bay University Health Board

Team wins award for their innovation in patient care

- Work of multidisciplinary team results in reduction in prescribed medicine and improved access to specialised care

Recognised for their multidisciplinary work, the medicine management team won the Primary Care Team of the Year at the Wales Pharmacy Awards. The award also recognised the team's contributions to virtual wards (launched in 2021) and the persistent pain service. Through virtual wards, pharmacists provide specialised support, conducting medication reviews and home visits to reduce hospital admissions. They focus on medication optimisation, de-prescribing and patient education, resulting in 10.2% of reviewed medications being stopped.

For the persistent pain service, the team established multidisciplinary meetings for complex patients and created an online resource, "Improving Life with Long Term Pain," to empower patients. This collaborative effort with GPs and other services improves patient wellbeing and access to specialised care, particularly for housebound individuals. The team's dedication to improving patient care and access to vital services was praised by health board leadership.

Velindre University NHS Trust

Team secure financial support for cancer patients and families

- Team secures £1.3 million in financial support to alleviate cancer burden on over 300 patients and families.

Between July and September 2024, the Velindre Macmillan Welfare Benefits Team has secured £1.3 million in financial support for over 300 patients and families, highlighting their crucial role in alleviating financial burdens faced by those affected by cancer. As an Advice Quality Standard (AQS) accredited service, the team assist with diverse applications, including health-related benefits and disabled parking badges.

Paired with the rising cost of living, cancer diagnoses can cause a significant financial strain on patients. However, the team navigates the complex benefits system, helping patients to identify entitlements and optimise claims. This support ensures financial stability during challenging times, allowing patients to focus on their health. Their expertise provides vital assistance, mitigating the financial anxieties that often accompany a cancer diagnosis.

Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust

New paramedic initiative reduces hospital admissions

- New partnership with health board delivers care closer to home, reducing hospital admissions by 70%

The Welsh Ambulance Service, in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, has launched a new initiative in Blaenau Gwent, deploying Advanced Paramedic Practitioners (APPs) to deliver care closer to home. APPs - registered paramedics with enhanced training and prescribing abilities - work both in emergency response and primary care, supporting GP surgeries.

Four APPs serve 10 surgeries, conducting home visits to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. This early intervention allows patients to access community resources and remain at home whenever possible.

Data shows APP interventions reduce hospital admissions by 70% compared to traditional ambulance crews. This collaboration improves patient wellbeing; eases hospital pressures and delivers care in patients' preferred environment. Over 100 APPs now operate across Wales, including in control rooms, demonstrating the evolving role of paramedics in the healthcare system.



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