



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

PUBLICATION

Welsh Government Board Meeting: 13 January 2023

Agenda and minutes from the Board meeting held on 13 January 2023.

First published: 27 March 2023

Last updated: 27 March 2023

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Agenda

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Oral

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2. Update on the current position in the NHS, Ambulance Service and Social Care Services in Wales.

Paper item 2

Paper not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

3. Finance update

Paper item 3

Paper not published as it contains information relating to the financial interests of the Welsh Government.

4. Programme for Government

Paper item 4

Paper not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

5. Welsh Government 2025 Action Plan

Paper item 5

Papers not published as it contains information relating to the formulation or development of government policy.

6. Any other business

Oral

See minutes.

Present

- The Permanent Secretary (Chair)
- Meena Upadhyaya
- Gareth Lynn
- Ellen Donovan
- Aled Edwards
- Tracey Burke
- Judith Paget
- Andrew Slade
- Claire Bennett
- Reg Kilpatrick
- Tim Moss
- Peter Kennedy
- Gawain Evans
- Helen Lentle

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- Andrew Jeffreys
- Zakhiya Begum

In attendance

- Catrin Sully
- Nick Wood
- Albert Heaney

Secretariat

- Alison Rees
- Daniel Taylor

Apologies

- Aled Edwards
- Jo-Anne Daniels
- David Richards

1. Welcome

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the Board meeting. The minutes of the meeting of 02 December were agreed. The Chair provided updates on several areas.

1.2 The Chair welcomed Carys Williams and Amelia John to the meeting; Carys will take up her post as Non-Executive Director in March while Amelia has

recently taken over the role of Board Equalities Champion from Andrew Jeffreys. The Chair offered thanks on behalf of the Board to Andrew for his input over the last three and half years, noting his enthusiasm and determination in driving and supporting the equalities agenda.

2. Update on the current position in the NHS, ambulance Service and Social Care Services in Wales

2.1 The Chair noted that this item was included in the agenda at the request of the Non-Executive Directors and invited Judith Paget, Nick Wood and Albert Heaney to update Board on the current position in the NHS and social care systems in Wales, highlighting current issues and actions.

2.2 Judith began by noting that work has been underway to build resilience into the NHS and social care system since the summer of 2022 in preparation for the winter period. Hospitals saw unprecedented demand over the Christmas period with some 900 more patients in hospital on Christmas Day 2022 than in 2021. All reasonable steps have been taken to open surge capacity and steps taken to encourage and support the safe discharge of medically fit patients. Judith added that the system is beginning to settle after responding well to the challenges it faced over the Christmas period.

2.3 Regarding social care, Albert Heaney noted that actions had been put in place to increase the pace and scale of moving individuals from hospitals into care settings. Alongside responding to immediate pressures, Albert highlighted work underway to plan and define what a national care service for Wales could look like.

2.4 Ellen noted the challenges that an aging population poses and queried

whether the NHS and social care systems in Wales have the necessary capability amongst senior managers to provide radical solutions to the challenge ahead. Gareth echoed these comments and highlighted the need for debate on whether the health and social care system in Wales is fit for the 21st century and noted the need for creative solutions to tackle the challenges ahead. Aled queried whether there is a need for fundamental examination of how messages around health and social care are communicated with the public to encourage the public to respond appropriately. Meena asked whether the NHS in Wales is working effectively with private health care providers.

2.5 On behalf of the Shadow Board Zak welcomed the level of detail provided in the accompanying paper and queried what steps can be taken to increase vaccination rates amongst health and social care staff. Zak also noted the impact Long Covid may have going forward and added that the Shadow Board recognised that industrial action by nurses and ambulance staff is not simply about pay but also about working conditions.

2.6 In response Judith agreed that bold moves are required to effect the necessary change. On the question of capability to tackle the challenges ahead, Judith commented that there is capability, but that capacity may be more of an issue. On the issue of communicating effectively with the public, Judith suggested potentially drawing on behavioural science support from Public Health Wales to develop more effective ways of getting messages about how the public can support the NHS and ambulance services through decisions they make.

2.7 The Chair thanked all for their comments and reflected that the pressures seen by the NHS and social care systems in recent months are beyond anything previously experienced. The Chair added that despite these challenges the NHS is delivering more planned activity than before the pandemic.

3. Finance update - Period 8

3.1 The Chair invited Gawain Evans to provide an update on the Period 8 finance position.

3.2 Gawain noted an improvement in the in-year position from Period 7 and added that there remains sufficient headroom to drawdown further funds from the Wales Reserve if needed. Andrew Jeffreys noted that discussions on public sector pay are ongoing and that officials are exploring a range of options.

3.3 Ellen Donovan queried whether movement on the revenue position will impact on Welsh Government borrowing. Gawain responded that this is an option that is being considered.

3.4 On behalf of the Shadow Board, Zak queried whether underspends demonstrate that teams are being asked to deliver more than is feasible.

3.5 Tracey Burke highlighted the impact of the Cooperation Agreement on the scope to make timely decisions to repurpose budgets.

3.6 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted that the improved position at Period 8 is due to the decisions taken by Cabinet and actions taken at Group level.

4. Programme for Government update

4.1 The Chair invited Catrin Sully to update Board on progress made against the commitments in the Programme for Government (PfG) and the re-prioritisation exercise.

4.2 Catrin noted that the PfG had been re-prioritised in response to budget pressures. As a result of this exercise, a small number of PfG commitments will be amended; the First Minister is considering whether to publish a revised PfG or make the amendments via the PfG Annual Report. Plans are also underway to establish a PfG Delivery Group.

4.3 Des Clifford noted his thanks to Catrin and her team for their work on the re-prioritisation exercise and commented that the PfG needs to adapt and change in response to economic and social changes.

4.4 The Chair invited comments from the Board. Ellen queried whether there are plans to collate the information from the various lessons learned exercises on the budget process to provide a blueprint for the future. Aled Edwards suggested that there may be value in considering the fiscal value of social partnership working and highlighted how Welsh Government working in partnership with key stakeholders was facilitating the introduction of potentially contentious elements of the new school curriculum.

5. Welsh Government 2025 Action Plan

5.1 The Chair invited Tim Moss and Natalie Pearson to provide an update on WG2025. The WG2025 action plan has been developed as a programme document setting out clear goals, deliverables and action owners and will be used to monitor progress, support scrutiny and challenge. The action plan will be published on the Welsh Government intranet and include a narrative section setting out the purpose and focus of WG2025 as well as more detailed workstream plans for colleagues with specific areas of interest.

5.2 Tim asked Board for their reflections on the action plan. On behalf of the Shadow Board Zak noted that there remains some confusion amongst staff over the aim and objectives of WG2025 and suggested that engaging with the staff

diversity networks could contribute to disseminating the information and gaining support for WG2025. Tim replied that meetings with network chairs have been arranged.

5.3 Des Clifford noted the progress that has been made with WG2025 and suggested expanding on Welsh Government's drive towards bilingualism and social mobility.

5.4 Gareth Lynn welcomed the update and commented that WG2025 was a vehicle for empowering Welsh Government to improve its performance.

5.5 Claire Bennett suggested that reference to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act needs strengthening in the action plan and queried whether One Public Service Wales should also be a workstream. On One Public Service Wales, Reg Kilpatrick responded that this area of work is materially different to other parts of the action plan and cautioned against conflating it with the WG2025 change programme. Instead, Reg suggested that One Public Service Wales should be a strong theme within WG2025.

5.6 The Chair thanked all for their comments and noted that he would be discussing WG2025 with the First Minister shortly. The Chair suggested One Public Service Wales as an agenda item for a future Board meeting.

6. Any other business

6.1 No items of Any Other Business were raised. The Board will next meet in early March.

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