

WELSH GOVERNMENT INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Title of proposal:	NHS WALES ANNUAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2021-22
Official(s) completing the Integrated Impact Assessment (name(s) and name of team):	Heather Giles NHS Planning Health and Social Services Group
Department:	Health and Social Services Group
Head of Division/SRO (name):	Samia Saeed Edmonds
Cabinet Secretary/Minister responsible:	Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Health and Social Services
Start Date:	25 NOVEMBER 2020

SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

Introduction

The NHS Wales Act 2006 places a financial duty on health boards to 'break even' every year over the course of a three year accounting period. Also under this Act, Ministers have a duty to issue 'Directions' to health boards, and other organisations on an informal basis, requiring them to prepare a plan to improving the health of people for whom it is responsible, and the provision of health care to such people.

The NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014 amended the 2006 Act. This amendment ensured that each health board should 'break even' over a three year, rather than a one year, period. Welsh Ministers are also permitted to allow a margin of tolerance.

NHS Planning Frameworks have been issued annually for the past seven years by Welsh Government, to discharge the duty for Welsh Ministers to set 'Directions' to the service. These enable health boards to fulfil their duties by producing an approved plan, an Integrated Medium Term Plans (IMTPs), as they have become known.

For the first time, the integrated medium term planning (IMTP) process was paused in March 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. All IMTP approvals remain extant from the previous year and quarterly planning arrangements were introduced for 2020-21.

This Welsh Government intends to develop and issue an **NHS Wales Annual Planning Framework for 2021-22 ('the framework')**. This requires all NHS organisations to submit an annual plan for the next financial year, to Welsh Government by 31 March 2021.

Rational for the annual planning

With COVID-19 still present in our communities the NHS will need to plan in the context of significant uncertainty with agility and flexibility. It would be difficult for any organisation to produce, and achieve board approval for a balanced three year plan, with any degree of certainty.

Fears that short plans result in less scrutiny in terms of the financial rolling duty are not founded. There has been more frequent engagement with Chief Executives and professional groups over the last six months. In addition, the planning arrangements and the minimum data set which have been introduced for Quarter 3 and Quarter 4 this year, has allowed more comprehensive discussions and understanding of organisations decisions and management of risks.

Introducing the requirement for an annual plan for 2021-22 is a natural evolution from the quarterly planning arrangements supported in 2020-21. It would be challenging to move back to three year IMTPs from what has been, and continues to be, a very fluid and volatile planning environment.

An annual plan for 2021-22 will provide a solid foundation for organisations to resume the formal IMTP process in the future.

The framework has been developed consistently with the *Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* at the centre of our thinking, drawing on the five ways of working, and aligning with the commitments made in *A Healthier Wales*.

Long term

The framework covers the 12 months period from April 21 to March 22. Although the plan is focused on operational aspects, it should also be seen as the first step to reset and recovery in the longer term.

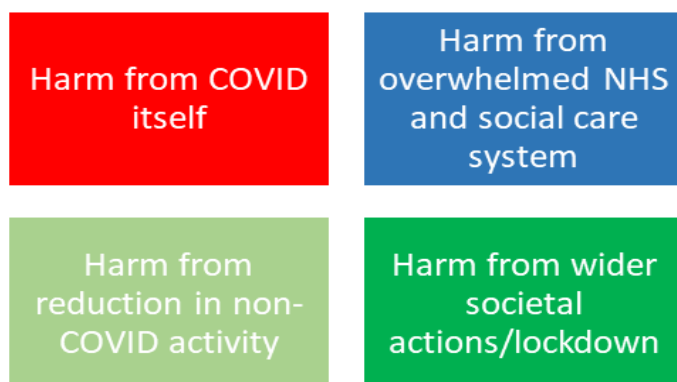
There are longer term goals and ambitions which strategic planning would expect to be able to support. The need to focus more operationally for the next 12 months is a reflection of the environment in which we all find ourselves. However, being cognisant of the longer term goals and commitments, such as decarbonisation, socio-economic duty, and the well-being of future generations, enables those operational decisions to be taken against a backdrop of these goals in mind.

The need to focus on operational issues comes as a result of COVID-19, which has been a pandemic which affected the whole world, reaching Europe in spring 2020. In Wales, as of 6 October, more than 26,000 people have been confirmed as having COVID-19 and there have been 1640 deaths:

[Public Health Wales COVID-19 daily surveillance data](#)

We need to plan and change the way we live our lives and the way in which we deliver our health and social services to adapt to the challenges that COVID-19 present.

The Winter Protection Plan published in September 2020 addresses the four levels of harm from COVID-19: [Welsh Government Winter Protection Plan 2020-21](#)



The requirements in the Winter Protection Plan and the Quarter 3/Quarter 4 Operating Framework, issued soon afterwards, underpin and support those contained in this framework. The intention is for planning to be a continuous activity, reviewing and refreshing what has gone before, rather than a new plan stand along plan developed each time.

The lessons learnt from the work undertaken to respond to the pandemic will be critical in supporting recovery and long-term continuity. The framework will recognise the need to reflect the opportunities that have emerged during the pandemic to support new ways of

working, such as the introduction of innovative and digital solutions, financial investment and strengthened partnership, governance and planning arrangements.

Prevention

The framework supports the prevention agenda, requiring health boards and other NHS organisations to plan their activities to ensure they address both preventing the spread and impact of COVID-19 and supporting those people with other health conditions.

Setting the prevention section in the broader public health arena, we know that COVID has had a disproportionate effect on people that are overweight, diabetics and blood pressure, smokers etc. so developing preventative approaches are crucial to improved outcomes and prevention of ill health.

Ensuring screening is key to diagnosis and treatment often preventing an escalation of care and impacts on patients and improving outcomes where there is early diagnosis.

The vaccination programme will be a significant priority within the framework. The programme is a priority because it covers both the usual childhood vaccinations and immunisation in order to keep children and young people safe, influenza vaccinations and the COVID-19 mass vaccination exercise, likely to be deployed in strength in 2021-22.

Continuing focus will be made of the Test, Trace and Protect strategy within the framework. The expectation will be for organisations to recognise that they need to work closely with local authorities, to ensure people are tested and traced as quickly as possible to contain the spread and impact of COVID-19 as much as possible.

Similarly, the framework requires organisations to consider how best to treat those with non COVID-19 conditions, to ensure that patients with symptoms are able to get rapid diagnosis and treatment to prevent their disease developing further, particular those with life threatening illnesses.

Integration

Prosperity for All has been considered. The framework sets the context within which health boards and other NHS organisations are expected to plan for 2021-22. The need to build an integrated seamless service is recognised in *A Healthier Wales*.

[A Healthier Wales Action Plan](#)

Although the framework is operationally focused, health organisations will need to set out clearly how they expect to work in an integrated way with their statutory and non-statutory partners in managing their activity over the 12 month period April 21 to March 22.

The framework needs to reflect an integrated approach to planning too. So that the plans produced address the four harms that have been the fundamental approach to recovery in Wales.

The framework will set out the expectation that health boards and other NHS organisations must continue to take action to reduce the impact of the four harms which include:

- remaining ready to provide the full range of services needed to prevent, diagnose, isolate and treat COVID-19 patients

- ensuring that they provide essential services at all times. This includes services that are urgent and life threatening or life impacting as well as services that without timely intervention could result in harm over the longer term such as maintaining vaccination programmes
- reinstating routine services where it is operationally possible and safe to do so, with strict adherence to infection prevention and hygiene procedures and maximising the use of virtual consultations; and
- working to review referrals of those waiting and ensure people have been prioritised according to clinical need.

The framework will remain committed to this approach.

Collaboration

Prosperity for All champions working collaboratively across boundaries to deliver improvement in health and well-being for the population of Wales.

The framework is an important document which will fulfil the duty for Minister to offers Directions to the service. The NHS planning framework is well known across a range of stakeholders and they are aware of the usual planning timetable that health organisations work to.

The framework, while focusing on the 12 months April 21 to March 22, requires all partner organisations to demonstrate their contribution to tackling COVID-19 and to preventing further spread and impact from the disease contribute over the next financial year. The expectation is that COVID-19 will still be circulating in our communities for some time to come and all partners will need to work together to ensure the spread and impact of COVID-19 is reduced as much as possible.

While the time period to produce the framework has been short the Welsh Government have ensured that a wide range of stakeholders have been made aware of its development, including members of the Senedd.

Involvement

The framework has been developed in order to guide NHS organisations into what they should focus on for the next financial year. The framework will support their own planning processes in order that they produce a plan, agreed by their board, which can be submitted by 31 March 2021.

NHS Wales organisations, local authorities, third and independent sector are aware of the annual planning process and have supported the annual approach adopted for 2021-22. While some involvement has been able to be undertaken with some groups and professionals, because of the production of quarterly planning frameworks and the winter protection plan in recent weeks there has been less opportunity to fully involve colleagues in the development than would be ideally supported.

Impact

The framework fulfils the duty for Welsh Ministers to issue 'Directions' to the NHS in Wales under the NHS Wales Act 2006 and the amended duties set in the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014. The framework provides the context within which health boards and other NHS organisations are expecting to address the challenges they face in 2021-22.

The framework will build on the quarterly frameworks issued in 2020-21 and draw on the overarching priorities set out in the Welsh Government's the Winter Protection Plan, issued in mid-September.

[NHS Wales Operating Framework-quarter-1-2020-2021](#)

[NHS Wales Operating Framework-quarter-2-2020-2021](#)

[NHS Wales Operating Framework-quarter-3quarter-4-2020-21](#)

[Welsh Government Winter Protection Plan 2020-21](#)

The framework will provide reassurance and direction around what is needed next to keep services joined up and support patients and staff over the coming 12 months. It will provide clear messages to the public and stakeholders that further work will be undertaken to support greater levels of testing, through the Test, Trace and Protect Strategy for Wales, as well as delivering an expanded and comprehensive vaccination campaign next year.

Costs and Savings

No financial cost will be incurred in scoping and developing the framework by the health and social services group within the Welsh Government. However, there has already been considerable investment in the health and social care infrastructure during 2020-21 to support the main requirements set out in the framework. For example this includes:

- Over £1.3bn allocated to support the NHS response to Covid. This includes the £800m stabilisation funding for NHS Wales announced in August.
- £45m for Test, Trace and Protect Strategy implementation
- £62.7m through the Local Authority Hardship fund, to support providers of adult social care.
- £40m to support the social care workforce.

This funding will be used to support actions continuing into 2021-22 and the funding allocations for 2021-22 will be announced in the autumn.

Mechanism

Legislation is not proposed as part of this work, a regulatory impact assessment is not necessary.

SECTION 7. CONCLUSION

7.1 How have people most likely to be affected by the proposal been involved in developing it?

Planning frameworks have been produced annually to provide the 'Directions' to the service, in readiness for NHS organisations to have an approved plan for the next financial year.

This year's framework is a natural evolution of the quarterly operational frameworks that were issued in 2020-21 by way of response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework for 2021-22 will be developed rapidly in order to provide the NHS in Wales with appropriate information and guidance as to the Ministerial priorities, as well setting the context for the current environment within which we are operating.

The people most likely affected by the proposal are managers, professional and clinical staff across NHS Wales, as well as local authority partners, third sector and independent sector, all of whom support the health and social care system. Patients, too will be affected by the way in which organisations plan to support them, by addressing the four harms endorsed by the World Health Organisation.

All stakeholders have been kept informed of the production of the annual planning framework 2021-22. This approach was agreed by the Minister on 22 October 2020.

The framework will be developed through discussion with colleagues across the health and social services department within Welsh Government, professional leads and senior colleagues from within the service such as NHS Chief Executives, Directors of Planning, and Directors of Finance etc.

This framework will build on the areas outlined in the Winter Protection Plan and the Quarter 3/ Quarter 4 Framework for NHS Wales. Engagement with stakeholders to provide those documents have also helped and supported the development of this framework.

Stakeholders are sighted on the development of the framework through correspondence from the Director General/Chief Executive for NHS Wales and are being made aware that the framework will be published in November 2020.

7.2 What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The framework should have a positive impact on people across Wales. The framework is the Minister's 'Directions' to the NHS as required by law under the NHS Wales Act 2006 amended by the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014.

It sets out what is required of health boards, and other NHS organisations, need to take into account when they develop their plans for 2021-22. Organisations will not be starting afresh but will be building on the developments they have already made in response to the Winter Protection Plan and the Quarter 3/ Quarter 4 Operating Framework, which are guiding them over this forthcoming winter period. The annual plan evolves from this planning and takes the organisation on the next step of its journey.

Health boards need to plan to meet the health needs of their respective populations and must do so regardless of age, race, religion, etc. The framework makes clear the need for organisations to ensure that people have equal access to diagnosis and treatment across the four harms.

There is recognition in the framework that some groups of people have been adversely affected by COVID-19. The framework reinforces for organisations the need to mitigate this, deploying the test, trace and protect arrangements that are geared to reducing the spread of COVID-19 and supporting vaccination programmes for children and young people, influenza and COVID-19 as vaccines become available. These are key pillars for their annual plans in 2021-22.

The framework recognises the need for essential services to operate throughout 2021-22 to ensure that people with non COVID-19 conditions are able to seek advice and treatment safely and in a timely manner. It is important that the plans show a balance in this respect and the framework encourages this approach.

7.3 In light of the impacts identified, how will the proposal:

- **Maximise contribution to our well-being objectives and the seven well-being goals and/or;**
- **Avoid, reduce or mitigate any negative impacts**

The framework is underpinned by both Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2016 and 'a Healthier Wales'. The health and social services in Wales can provide appropriate treatment and care for people with COVID-19 symptoms and those with non COVID-19 other conditions.

The framework promotes an integrated approach to health and social care and using the four harms as a structure promotes positive impacts and seeks to reduce health and well-being inequalities.

7.4 How will the impact of the proposal be monitored and evaluated as it progresses and when it concludes?

The impact of the framework will be monitored through the production of the annual plans submitted by health boards, and other organisations, by 31 March 2021.

The annual plans will be reviewed and monitored during 2021-22, to assess how well each organisation is able to address the requirements and deliver on the wider commitments to keep Wales safe.