

WELSH GOVERNMENT INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Title of proposal:	Aspiring Board Members Programme Delivery Plan
Official(s) completing the Integrated Impact Assessment (name(s) and name of team):	Monica Bason-Flaquer
Department:	Health and Social Services
Head of Division/SRO (name):	Emma Spear
Cabinet Secretary/Minister responsible:	Minister for Health & Social Services, Jeremy Miles
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SECTION 1: WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

Background

The Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) gave evidence that racial disparity continues to exist in Wales, including within the NHS. Consultation responses indicated that recruitment and promotion within health and social care in Wales is discriminatory towards minority ethnic groups, and minority ethnic staff are underrepresented in leadership. Further evidence demonstrates that Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are underrepresented in Welsh public appointments and experience unequal access to professional development opportunities and progression pathways. Systemic issues negatively impact the diversity of public appointments by disadvantaging underrepresented groups.

In 2024, the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) found that the representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic populations in the NHS workforce exceeds their representation in the general population by 3.25%, but their representation on boards lags 5.88% below workforce representation. The Welsh Government believes that public bodies should have board members who reflect Welsh society, people from all walks of life, to help them understand people's needs and to make better decisions. Greater diversity enables access to a fuller range of lived experiences, resulting in improved understanding which can support better strategic decisions reflecting the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

The delivery of an 'Aspiring Board Members Programme' for people from minority ethnic backgrounds is a key health commitment within the ArWAP. The Aspiring Board Members programme sits within the focus area, 'your experience when you lack visible role models in positions of power.' By delivering the Aspiring Board Members Programme, the Welsh Government and NHS Wales are acknowledging racism exists in the current public appointments system and actively committing to improve this.

Proposal

The Aspiring Board Members programme is a leadership development programme designed to prepare Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals (including Gypsy, Roma and Travellers) to secure and succeed in independent member roles within NHS bodies in Wales. The Aspiring Board Members Programme is a comprehensive 12-month leadership development initiative which will include learning events, unpaid Board placements, and independent leadership coaching.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Creating a more equal Wales, where everyone can participate, reach their full potential, and contribute fully to the economy, will enable Wales to be more prosperous and innovative. The ABM Programme supports this goal. Within the Future Generations Indicators, indicator 27

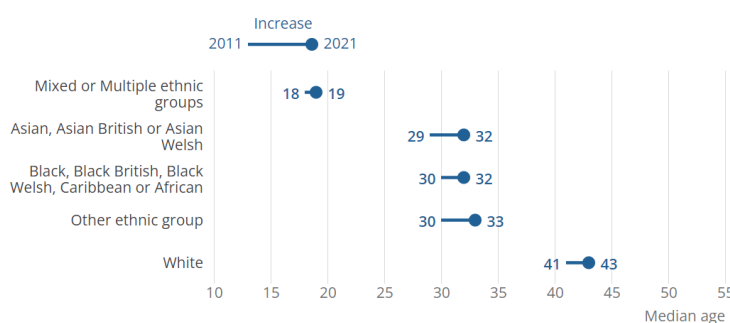
‘feeling that their local area has a sense of community’ has been found to be linked to indicator 23, ‘feeling able to influence decisions in their local area’. Having the opportunity to hold a public appointment may therefore support these indicators. The programme design reflects the sustainable development principle and the ‘five ways of working’ in section 5 of the 2015 Act. A focus on anti-racism could be negatively perceived and this has been considered in the development of the programme’s communication and promotion plan. To mitigate this risk, information sessions will be delivered ahead of the launch of programme recruitment which clarify the programme eligibility criteria and provide clear messaging on the evidence base for the need for the programme. Aspiring Board Members programme will directly contribute to the National Wellbeing Goals A Healthier Wales; A Prosperous Wales; and a More Equal Wales.

Thinking for the long-term and prevention

The Aspiring Board Members programme will contribute to **Quadruple Aim 3 of A Healthier Wales** – *The health and social care workforce in Wales is motivated and sustainable.*

The programme supports calls for a fundamental shift in our understanding of the workforce and kickstarting capacity building in core professional capability areas. Black, Asian, mixed, and other ethnic groups in the UK are younger on average

Figure 1
Average (median) age by high-level ethnic groups, England and Wales, 2011 and 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Census 2011 and Census 2021

compared to White ethnic groups (*Figure 1*). Increased opportunities for ethnic minorities could support long-term workforce sustainability within this context. The programme will directly support improvements against WRES Indicator 1- *Percentage difference by ethnicity between the organisations’ Board executive and non-executive membership and its overall workforce.*

Integration and Collaboration

The Aspiring Board Members Programme Working Group which collaboratively developed the programme includes representatives from:

- Academi Wales
- Welsh Government Health and Social Care Early Years Group, ArWAP team, NHS Workforce team, Public Appointments Team, and Diversity in the Workplace team
- NHS Wales Directors of Corporate Governance Group and Workforce Directors Peer Group
- Minority ethnic individuals with lived experience of the Public Appointments process

All health bodies in Wales, along with Llais Wales, have committed to supporting the programme by sponsoring an Aspiring Board Member for a board placement.

Involvement

People affected by the proposal were involved as part of the ABM Programme Working Group. This included both people with lived experience and key stakeholder groups within the NHS and Welsh Government. Analysis of the findings of previous engagement with minority ethnic communities and public appointees in Wales also informed the programme development.

This involvement ensured that the programme design reflects what matters to the people affected. This included making the programme design, recruitment and promotion inclusive and targeted to reach the relevant audiences; refining the role of board sponsors; and ensuring that the programme provides participants with an opportunity to see themselves represented in the public sector. The taught learning programme includes a wide range of speakers and cofacilitators from across health, social care, and the broader public sector, many of whom are from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. The identification of coaches who have lived experience from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds has also been identified as a priority through this engagement.

Costs and Savings

At this stage, the ABM Programme has only secured funding and commitment for the first cohort, to be completed by summer 2026. Full benefits realisation is likely to require a greater period to implement, test and refine the programme and to see the implementation and realisation of wider changes to debias public appointments processes. As reflected above, collaborative delivery of the programme across the public sector has enabled best use of resources, particularly as many speakers are delivering at no cost as part of their working roles.

SECTION 8: CONCLUSION

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

The ABM programme is a specific health commitment within the ArWAP, which will support progress against the WRES. It directly contributes to the vision of the ArWAP of 'Wales as an anti-racist nation.' The inclusion of the ABM programme in the ArWAP responded directly to evidence provided as part of Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales consultation in 2022, and several other reports referenced throughout this impact assessment have engaged with both minority ethnic communities and current public appointees to health in Wales in recent years. The evidence and recommendations of these provided a key basis for the design and development of the programme.

The ABM Programme Working Group included individuals from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, and sought additional input specifically from minority ethnic individuals with relevant lived and professional experience of the public appointments process, holding a public appointment, and within leadership development.

The Welsh Language Policy Unit within Health, Social Care, and Early Years, as well as the Cymraeg 2050 team, participated in the development of the programme to ensure the needs of Welsh speakers as course participants are considered, as well as to embed key themes around Welsh language in health into the syllabus. For further details, see Welsh Language Assessment.

Other affected groups engaged in the development of the programme have included the Public Appointments unit, the Board Secretaries and Chairs of NHS bodies in Wales, NHS Workforce and Operational Development Peer Group.

What are the most significant impacts, positive and negative?

The Aspiring Board Members programme will directly contribute to delivery of the following wellbeing goals:

- **A Healthier Wales** - by building a sustainable pipeline of future leaders to support national commitments to health and wellbeing
- **A Prosperous Wales** and **A More Equal Wales** - by supporting professional development of people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, increasing their opportunities to contribute to change within society.

Given the NHS's role in Wales as an anchor institution and largest employer in Wales, eradicating racism and discrimination is key in enabling it to meet its potential in being an exemplar employer in workforce health and wellbeing, which, in turn, will maximise its potential in providing timely and quality care for the people of Wales. Anti-racist health and care workplaces will have healthy,

well, productive colleagues and will have decreased sickness and absence rates and find it easier to retain staff.

The most significant impacts for **people** will be those for individual programme participants and will be positive. Participants in the Aspiring Board Members Programme will bring relevant and valuable skills and experience. The programme will improve their understanding of the Welsh health system and help them recognise the value they can bring as leaders. By the end, there will be a cohort of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic individuals who are 'board ready' with new, valuable experience and knowledge specific to NHS Wales board contexts. The programme will have a positive impact on their career development and potential to go on into public appointments.

The most significant impacts on **culture and Welsh Language** will be positive. Broader representation and greater inclusivity of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds within the NHS will foster a greater understanding and appreciation of different cultures, contributing to the promotion and protection of culture and heritage. The programme will support ambitions to facilitate increased use of Welsh within the public sector workforce, and the vision of More Than Just Words to embed Welsh in health and social care services in Wales.

The most significant **economic impacts** will be positive. The programme has the potential to support participants in ways that may positively impact their career and employment potential. For businesses, the most significant impacts will be on the NHS, on improving their reputation and supporting a healthy, motivated workforce which can have overall positive impacts on staff retention, wellbeing and productivity.

There are no significant **environmental** impacts anticipated.

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?

Creating a more equal Wales, where everyone can participate, reach their full potential and contribute fully to the economy, will enable Wales to be more prosperous and innovative. The ABM Programme supports this goal. Within the Future Generations Indicators, indicator 27 'feeling that their local area has a sense of community' has been found to be linked to indicator 23, 'feeling able to influence decisions in their local area'. Having the opportunity to hold a public appointment may therefore support these indicators. The programme design reflects the sustainable development principle and the 'five ways of working' in section 5 of the 2015 Act.

Most importantly, through involvement and collaboration, lived experience of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people has been central to the development of the programme. A focus on anti-racism could be negatively perceived and this has been considered in the development of the programme's communication and promotion plan. To mitigate this risk, information sessions will be delivered ahead of the launch of programme recruitment which clarify the programme eligibility criteria and provide clear messaging on the evidence base for the need for the programme.

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

The Academi Wales Research team are leading on the programme evaluation. The evaluation model will focus on answering the following questions:

- Are we **enabling the outcomes**? (Are we undertaking the right activities with the target group in the best way?)
- Are we **reaching our outcomes**? (Are we changing people's knowledge/ skills/ mindset? Are they meeting the learning outcomes?)
- Are we **making an impact**? (Are we causing behaviour change? Are people implementing the new knowledge/ skills/ mindset that we teach them?)

This model will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the programme's design, promotion, and recruitment; of the participant, sponsor, and board experiences; and of the participant, sponsor, and board impacts.

Evaluation will be conducted throughout the programme delivery so that any immediate opportunities for improvement can be identified. Following the programme's conclusion, the full results of the evaluation will be reviewed to inform next steps and recommendations for the programme's future.