

Jeremy Miles AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: DC/JMHSC/00046/26

Ruth Galzzard – Interim Chair
Helen Thomas – Chief Executive
Digital Health and Care Wales

12 February 2026

Dear Ruth and Helen,

This letter follows the Digital Health and Care Wales Public Accountability Meeting on 29 January 2026. Thank you for your attendance at the meeting and for the evidence pack provided in advance of the meeting; this forms an important part of the meeting record. The meeting recording can be found at [Digital Health and Care Wales Public Accountability Meeting](#).

This letter sets out my reflections from the meeting, which we will continue to review in our regular meetings.

I welcomed your honesty about both progress and challenges. However, what emerged clearly was the need for stronger forward-planning, earlier escalation of risk, and a much clearer articulation of benefits and system value. These are issues the Welsh Government expects to see addressed quickly. I have set out some specific issues:

- **The NHS Wales App** – The public need a more integrated, seamless, and universally reliable product before this can be described as the primary digital front door for Wales. Concerns were raised about fragmentation, differential availability across Wales, and the lack of a defined critical path that would move the app from useful to essential for citizens.

You acknowledged these concerns and committed to expanding functionality, improving inter-operability, strengthening user-centred design, and developing

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay 0300 0604400
Caerdydd • Cardiff Gohebiaeth.Jeremy.Miles@llyw.cymru
CF99 1SN Correspondence.Jeremy.Miles@gov.wales

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

clearer performance measures. These developments will need to accelerate if we are to be confident that citizens in all parts of Wales receive consistent value.

- **National programme delivery** – The delays and late identification of risks in key national programmes were discussed in depth. You recognised challenges in major programme delivery, including delays in diagnostics and other systems, and discussed measures to improve early risk identification, stakeholder confidence, and agile programme management. You acknowledged that optimism bias, insufficient early discovery, supplier constraints and legacy system complexities have all contributed to late emergent issues, and that revised approaches are now being adopted.

You described efforts to build confidence among health boards, the Welsh Government, and the public include fostering shared ownership, improving visibility of programme status, and prioritising early discovery and realistic planning to manage expectations and reduce last-minute surprises.

- **Identifying risk** – I welcome the shift you described towards more agile programme structures, clearer milestones, more frequent testing cycles, and the increased involvement of chief executives in shared decision-making. These are positive steps, but they have been a long time in development, and you must shift to this approach immediately. My clear expectation is DHCW must alert Welsh Government significantly earlier when risks threaten delivery, avoiding the pattern of late notification that undermines system confidence and disrupts operational planning across Wales.

It is clear the organisation remains some distance from being able to consistently quantify return on investment, articulate realised benefits across Wales or demonstrate the scale of digital investment is matched by measurable improvements for citizens and clinicians. You believe you have a better understanding of the true cost of programme delays with gateway reviews and thematic analysis have identified recurring issues, especially insufficient early discovery work.

- **Improved metrics** – Given current financial pressures, the Welsh Government requires a far stronger benefits framework with transparent metrics, financial and non-financial outcomes, and system endorsement across health boards. You have acknowledged this gap and committed to significant strengthening of this work.
- **Cyber and resilience** – We examined your cyber posture and the wider national resilience landscape. The board's role in leading system-wide cyber maturity is essential, and you provided assurance about the Security Operations Centre, the Cyber Resilience Unit, and the national monitoring system. You also recognised the need for a national governance board setting minimum cyber standards, and the importance of consistent adherence across health boards. The Welsh Government expects this area to continue receiving urgent attention and sees it as foundational to the future of digital healthcare.

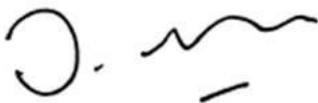
- **AI** – Artificial intelligence is being increasingly deployed across NHS Wales, often at local levels. You highlighted there is ongoing work to develop a national approach to AI governance and safe deployment requires system-wide standards and oversight.
- **National Data Resource/architecture** – the board emphasised that realising the full value of the NDR depends on health boards improving data quality, meeting data standards and accelerating data contribution to the repository. The Welsh Government supports this direction and expects DHCW to continue applying firm leadership in ensuring that all organisations play their part.

The meeting explored the substantial organisational change underway in DHCW, including the shift to a service-led, user-centred operating model, the move to continuous improvement cycles, and the development of multidisciplinary product teams. You acknowledged that delays, re-profiling and the pressures of legacy programmes have sometimes reduced confidence across the system, and you set out how the new operating model will help address these gaps.

Thank you for your engagement with the meeting. The path forward requires DHCW to reach a point where:

- The NHS Wales App delivers a universal, reliable experience for everyone in Wales.
- The organisation refines its ways of working, in the face of rising demand and rapidly expanding technological opportunity and strengthens delivery capability so future programmes avoid the challenges experienced to date.
- The governance and cultural changes planned are accelerated to support a more confident, responsive and assured organisation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a circular mark on the left and a series of wavy lines extending to the right, ending in a short horizontal stroke.

Jeremy Miles MS

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Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care