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## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY EVIDENCE PACK**

This evidence pack has been produced by Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) in support of the Public Accountability Meeting held on 12 February. It has been produced in line with guidance from Welsh Government.

**Date submitted: 2/2/2026**

**Date of meeting: 12/2/2026**

**Completed by: Health Education Improvement Wales**

## Introduction

HEIW is the strategic workforce organisation and Statutory Education Body for NHS Wales. The organisation's functions include a wide range of education and training responsibilities including planning, commissioning, quality management and delivery across many professions and education and training pathways. Established in 2018 to drive a sustainable and multi professional approach to the health and care workforce we also lead on:

- Once for Wales leadership development and succession planning
- Strategic approaches to future workforce planning, including national workforce plans and local capability building
- Provision of workforce data, analysis, and insights to support local and national workforce planning and policy changes
- Innovative national solutions and approaches to workforce development and transformation
- Promoting NHS careers, attraction campaigns and widening access

HEIW's purpose is to work with partners to develop a skilled and sustainable workforce that improves care and population health. We continue to prioritise and plan our work in line with the seven themes of the Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care which was launched in 2020. Informed by the remit letter and Improving Performance Together our priorities for 2025/26 include:

- National workforce solutions that support quality and productivity
- Workforce transformation to support preventative and place-based healthcare
- Excellent education and training
- Multi Professional working
- A Digital and technology ready workforce
- Effective leadership and compassionate cultures
- Future focused workforce plans

We collaborate closely with other NHS bodies to ensure that we add value through Once for Wales approaches, specialist services and advice, and new models of delivery. We also work in partnership with education providers, professional and regulatory bodies, Welsh Government (WG) and partners across the UK to fulfil our functions, with a clear focus on quality. To ensure that our contribution to NHS Wales is informed by evidence, research and best practice we work with credible subject matter experts, have close networks with our colleagues across the UK and are increasingly learning from international connections.

In 2025/26 our starting revenue budget was £349.18m, with 84% of this funding our education and training functions. We have a workforce of 675 people equating to 494 Full Time Equivalents. 75% of our head count relates to core HEIW staff working across all of our functions, and the remaining 25% relates to our sessional staff who

are largely employed in other parts of the NHS but contribute to HEIW education and training activities on a part time basis.

# 1. Supporting the Education and Training Needs of the Current and Future Workforce

The education and training pipeline is one of the most important foundations of NHS workforce supply. HEIW is responsible for both forecasting education and training needs to support future service delivery and securing the effective delivery of education and training to meet those needs. This is underpinned by the quality of workforce planning across the system, the accuracy and availability of workforce intelligence, and specialist expertise in commissioning and quality management of education and training across the wide range of health professions.

## Workforce Planning

HEIW has two main roles in driving effective workforce planning:

### 1. Increasing Local Skills and Capability for Workforce Planning

Each NHS organisation is responsible for its own workforce planning, as part of integrated service and financial planning. Local workforce plans submitted as part of IMTPs are used by HEIW to forecast education and training requirements. The quality of workforce planning has been identified as a priority area for development, given its potential impact on quality and cost. New initiatives that have been developed by HEIW in the last few years to support this include:

- **Standardised, evidence-based workforce planning resources:** A Data and Analytics Portal is now available together with the recently launched Workforce Planning Hub. This provides online toolkits and guidance aimed at operational, clinical and workforce managers, with over 7,800 visits in 6 months demonstrating strong engagement. The most frequently accessed resources include the *Options for Workforce Redesign* and the *Guide to Regional Workforce Planning*. The impact of this Hub will be evaluated with NHS organisations in 26/27.
- **Comprehensive online workforce planning training:** This is aimed at all managers, not only workforce managers, and has also been tailored for primary care. The training is supported by a Workforce Planning Competence Framework. There has been a 72% increase in the uptake of training since its launch online. 88% of participants have indicated that the training has had a positive impact on their practice as part of the ongoing evaluation.
- **Regional and National Communities of Practice:** Facilitating knowledge sharing, collaboration on improvement and development of all Wales workforce solutions, or in key service areas such as mental health.
- **Census and Labour Market Intelligence dashboards,** horizon scanning and workforce research analysis

Analysis of NHS organisations' IMTPs over the past 3 years provides evidence of a maturing workforce planning process across Wales with a more visible connection between service and education needs. However, this needs continued attention from all organisations including HEIW to ensure that all managers are competent and confident to lead and plan the level of workforce redesign that will be needed in the next few years.

## 2. National Role

The Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care launched in 2020 by HEIW and Social Care Wales was the first strategic approach to the development of a sustainable workforce for NHS Wales. One of the key actions was the urgent need to improve the quality and availability of workforce data as a pre-requisite to effective national workforce planning and more accurate demand and supply modelling. This work has been progressed and now provides HEIW and WG with the opportunity to adopt a national and regional approach to workforce planning that can drive service redesign and new models of care.

In the meantime, HEIW has worked with partners to develop a range of national strategic workforce plans in priority service and professional areas. In many instances these represent the first time there has been a clear national direction for workforce development to support WG strategies and relevant service ambitions. The plans that have been commissioned to date are all now at implementation stage and are included in section 2.

## Workforce Data and Intelligence

High quality, accessible workforce data remains fundamental to effective national and local workforce planning. As noted above from a low baseline HEIW has driven a step change in workforce data, with a focus on continued improvement. Work has focused on the following areas:

- **Data Quality:** In collaboration with partners HEIW has significantly strengthened data quality through shared definitions, standardised reconciliation processes and targeted validation tools. This has increased the consistency, comparability and transparency of workforce intelligence across Wales.
- **Accessibility:** HEIW has established a national Data and Analytics Portal ([HEIW Data and Analytics Portal - Home](#)), which consolidates interactive workforce dashboards, education pipeline intelligence and planning insights into a single, accessible platform. This includes indicators such as graduate flows, vacancies and broader workforce demographics and will facilitate end-to-end education to employment to retirement tracking by the end of the year.

- By providing a single, trusted version of the truth, the portal underpins a shared understanding of workforce challenges and opportunities across NHS Wales. It strengthens assurance and planning conversations and supports the development of a consistent approach to workforce modeling strategic workforce reform.
- **Trends:** HEIW also publishes the annual NHS Wales Workforce Trends Report ([heiw.nhs.wales/files/workforce-trends-report-march-2025/](https://heiw.nhs.wales/files/workforce-trends-report-march-2025/)), which reinforces HEIW's commitment to transparent, evidence-based insight and provides a comprehensive analysis of the key factors shaping workforce supply, demand and sustainability to inform plans and priorities.
- **Primary Care Workforce Data:** This is an in-year focus to ensure a more complete national view of the health and care workforce. All primary care contractor workforce data (General Medical Services, Pharmacy, Optometry and Dental) is now received monthly via Primary Care Workforce Intelligence System (PCWIS) and integrated into HEIW's data ecosystem, with General Medical Services the most mature, Pharmacy and Optometry improving in completeness, and Dental presenting the greatest ongoing data quality challenges. These data flows will support HEIW's ability to analyse staffing patterns, demographic changes, vacancy trends and pipeline expectations across primary care.
- **Supporting Value and Sustainability:** Enhanced data quality has enabled NHS Wales Performance & Improvement to undertake deeper analysis of workforce expenditure growth across Health Boards, using monthly monitoring returns dating back to 2019/20. This includes detailed examination of whole time equivalent (WTE) electronic staff record (ESR) workforce data shared by HEIW, providing insight into substantive workforce growth, band-level changes and specialty-specific staffing patterns. Together, these strengthened data foundations provide the system with a clearer understanding of the drivers of workforce and agency expenditure, supporting more targeted actions to improve sustainability and reduce reliance on agency staffing.

## Workforce Demand and Supply

Improving alignment between demand and supply has been dependent on the improvements in workforce data described above and will enable HEIW to provide a more comprehensive national role in relation to workforce demand and supply going forward, not just in relation to education and training which is only one dimension.

### Demand and Supply Modelling Capability

Given the lead in time needed to train or change our workforce the use of modelling and scenarios to understand future workforce demand and supply is increasingly essential. We have been working with Decision Analysis Services (DAS), who act as a technology and analytics partner, providing expert advice, hands on support, and

upskilling opportunities. This is strengthening our capacity to deliver high quality modelling and workforce intelligence at a national scale and benefitting from expertise of working with workforce data in NHS England. Significant progress has been made over the last two years to establish the foundations for robust national demand and supply analysis including:

- development of national workforce data pipelines
- repeatable modelling methods
- scenario-based analysis
- dashboards to support IMTP assurance
- Communities of Practice
- data quality verification tools
- strengthened analytical capability and data literacy

We have developed models collaboratively with NHS organisations, clinicians, professional bodies and WG, using a consistent methodology. This capability is already supporting real system decisions, including resident doctor workforce modelling and the Strategic Nursing Workforce Plan.

In addition, we are increasingly able to link education, training, workforce entry, progression, retention and exit, supporting end-to-end pipelines and impact. General Practice is the first area to fully benefit from this end-to-end workforce pipeline enabling us to track the impact of past investment in GP Training and identify opportunities to improve retention.

Ultimately improved quality and use of modelling will help us achieve better equilibrium between demand and supply, informing investment decisions including international recruitment and education commissioning, supporting risk management and reducing reliance on short-term, reactive solutions.

### **Process for Identification of Education and Training Needs**

To date HEIW's main contribution to Workforce Supply has been through education and training. HEIW's annual Education and Training Plan (ETP) plays a critical role in setting the training numbers for the future pipeline and securing the associated investment. This is informed by:

- Health Board and Trust Integrated Medium-Term Plans (IMTP)
- Workforce data, trends and labour market intelligence
- Training capacity in the system
- Welsh Government priorities and system wide programmes
- Input and evidence from Welsh Government Professional leads, trade unions / professional bodies, NHS Wales peer groups, Royal Colleges
- Cost, value and affordability
- Longer term ambitions and workforce plans

HEIW is responsible for translating these various inputs into a coherent set of recommendations that balance ambition, affordability and practicality. Given the

critical contribution of the ETP, the HEIW Board oversees its development through the Education Commissioning and Quality Committee (ECQC), board development sessions and our Stakeholder Reference Group meetings, before formally approving the submission to WG.

HEIW has sought to extend its influence in terms of the transition from education into employment, to ensure value is delivered from the investment. Performance tracking has been established which is particularly important for bursary funded students who have an obligation to work in Wales for 2 years post qualification. HEIW has developed and embedded student pipeline dashboards accessible by all NHS organisations, with regularly updated intelligence to support vacancy and graduate planning. These improvements have contributed to the reduction in vacancy levels across Wales.

The measures demonstrate a largely positive performance in terms of retaining graduates and trainees and provide insights to areas that require additional targeted action. For example, during 2025 there were some specific areas of mismatch between demand and supply namely adult nursing in the Swansea area and paramedics. We recognise that the Education and Training Plan is planning 3 to 4 years ahead, and local and national drivers can change during this time. In this case the issues were resolved through collaborative work with NHS colleagues to find innovative solutions. As a result of this work HEIW has identified the need to strengthen our partnership work through a more nationally coordinated and proactive approach to education and training commissioning and employment, that reflects local, regional and national perspectives.

The establishment of a Workforce Supply Oversight Group by HEIW from February 2026 will support NHS Wales organisations to make full and timely provision for graduates and share best practice and innovative solutions. This will bring together senior decision-making leaders from across NHS Wales to review data, identify risks early, and take timely mitigating action.

## **Education and Training Planning and Delivery/Quality and Impact**

HEIW has an education and training role for most of the health professions needed within NHS Wales. Notable exceptions are commissioning and oversight of undergraduate medicine, dental, pharmacy and optometry even though the shape and size of these programmes have a direct financial impact on HEIW and NHS Wales.

The current levels of investment are shown in the following table:

<b>Professional area</b>	<b>(£m)</b>
Nursing, Midwifery, Allied Health Professions, Health Sciences	153
Medical	89
GP	48
Pharmacy	16
Dental	11
Optometry	0.6
Primary care academies	2

<b>Total</b>	<b>319.6</b>
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Table 1: Current levels of professional area investment

The following sections provide key information in relation to specific professions:

### Medical

HEIW is responsible for the planning, commissioning, and quality management of postgraduate medical education and training in Wales. Effective links are maintained with undergraduate medical education in relation to quality, numbers and reform. Key areas of focus are summarised below:

**Current Training Numbers:** HEIW has delivered a planned programme of expansion over a three-to-five-year period to increase domestic supply and address service needs. The trends are shown on the following table, with an overall increase of 30% since 2019:

The Current Training Numbers for Resident Doctors is outlined in the table below:

<b>Resident Doctors</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Increase since 2019</b>
Foundation	870	222
Secondary Care	2,050	340
GP	730	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>~3650</b>	<b>~862</b>

Table 2: Current training numbers of resident doctors 2025 compared to 2019

Welsh Government plans to increase medical school output to 590 by 2031, require an equal expansion in the size of the Foundation Programme as medical graduates must complete Foundation year 1 to achieve registration with the GMC. In addition, there is a high reliance on International Medical Graduates within Wales (25-30%) reinforcing the need for a more sustainable domestic supply.

**Resident Doctor Recruitment:** Since 2020, recruitment outcomes have improved significantly, with over 95% of training posts now consistently filled.

The Foundation Programme Preference-Informed Allocation (PIA) process introduced in 2024 guaranteed allocation to Wales for applicants selecting it as their first choice. The change had a particularly positive impact on rural Health Boards, where Foundation fill rates increased from approximately 50% to 95–100%.

Overall secondary care specialty recruitment remains strong, with more than 95% of posts filled. This includes:

- Core psychiatry with a 100% fill rate for the last three years following a targeted programme. This has also resulted in an improvement in higher psychiatry training fill rates.
- Obstetrics and Gynaecology with 100% recruitment in 2025 after a number of challenging years

- 100% fill rates for a new dual training programme in General Internal Medicine and Stroke to strengthen service sustainability and the workforce pipeline.
- Persistent recruitment challenges in Clinical Oncology, Genito-Urinary Medicine, and Geriatric Medicine, with ongoing vacancies which mirror national UK trends. HEIW has introduced targeted training opportunities within Foundation and Internal Medicine (the principal feeder programme) to support recruitment into these specialties, and the impact of these measures will be monitored.

General Practice recruitment remains close to 100%, despite a significant expansion in programme size between 2019 and 2024. Training capacity, including the number of trained supervisors and approved practices, has increased across all regions of Wales, enabling further programme expansion.

The domestic medical workforce pipeline in Wales is now better aligned than pre-2019; however, service delivery and recruitment to training posts remain reliant on international medical graduates (IMGs), particularly in General Practice, Internal Medicine and Histopathology.

**Reform:** Changes are taking place to recruitment due to increased competition ratios for training posts due to increased UK medical graduates and a rise in IMG applicants. This has led to bottlenecks for trainees. HEIW is working closely with the UK to implement changes in order to monitor the impact on Wales. The Medical Training (Prioritisation) Bill was laid before Parliament on 13 January 2026.

**Attrition:** This is monitored through analysis of inter-deanery transfer (IDT) activity and trainee resignations. Attrition rates remain low, at under 4%, and compare favourably with rates reported elsewhere in the UK.

**Retention:** HEIW monitors retention data for all residents completing postgraduate medical training in Wales. Average retention across all specialty programmes, including General Practice, is currently between 75% and 80%. Some secondary care specialties demonstrate lower retention levels in the first few years after completing training (e.g. radiology 60%). Retention following completion of training is influenced by multiple factors, including expectations to undertake post training fellowships in some specialties, consultant post availability and the quality of the training experience. Specialties such as anaesthetics and clinical oncology, which report consistently high levels of resident doctor satisfaction, also demonstrate retention rates exceeding 95%.

HEIW continues to work collaboratively with stakeholders to monitor retention trends to ensure any emerging signals are fully explored. Over the past two years, HEIW has developed a dedicated dashboard that provides NHS Wales organisations with quarterly data on the number of resident doctors scheduled to complete training across all programmes for the next five years. This tool supports local and regional workforce planning and enables HEIW to proactively identify and escalate potential mismatches between consultant post availability and training programme outputs. For example, an

emerging risk has been identified for 2027, with projected trainee completions in clinical oncology exceeding available consultant posts. This has been escalated, and proactive discussions are underway with the relevant Health Boards and Trusts.

**Appraisal and Training Progression:** HEIW is the largest designated body in Wales with regulatory responsibility for the annual appraisal, revalidation recommendations, and oversight of fitness to practise concerns for approximately 3,650 resident doctors. Deferral rates and missed recommendations are low compared with other UK regions.

Annual appraisal for resident doctors is conducted through the Annual Review of Competence Progression (ARCP) process. This structured and quality-assured process reviews individual doctor competencies and assesses progression in training. It is essential for maintaining training standards, patient safety, and public confidence.

HEIW's ARCP process was reviewed by internal audit in 2025 and received a rating of substantial assurance.

HEIW also manages and delivers the GP appraisal process for all GPs in Wales on behalf of Health Boards. A network of HEIW-employed GP appraisers ensures that all GPs are offered annual appraisal. In 2025, HEIW delivered 2,685 GP appraisals, quality-assuring appraisal summaries and using aggregated learning needs data to inform future continuous professional development programmes in primary care.

HEIW undertakes Revalidation Quality Assurance (RQA) reviews of all designated bodies in Wales, including NHS Health Boards and private sector organisations. These reviews ensure consistency in policies, guidance, and quality improvement, providing assurance to the Chief Medical Officer as the higher-level Responsible Officer. Outcomes of these reviews inform an all-Wales action plan to support ongoing quality improvement. Wales is the only UK nation to operate a single platform and unified approach to medical appraisal and associated learning.

During the current 2024-6 cycle, 9 of the 13 designated bodies in Wales have been reviewed. All organisations visited demonstrated progress against improvement actions identified in the previous cycle.

Internal audit of HEIW's GP appraisal function in 2025 also provided substantial assurance.

**Resident Doctor Support:** HEIW has implemented a range of initiatives to enhance support for resident doctors and strengthen the medical workforce in Wales:

- **Programme Redesign and Regional Retention:** Training programmes have been reconfigured to reduce the need for relocation between North and South Wales, including through Memoranda of Understanding with NHS England North-West and stand-alone programmes. For example, the redesigned Dermatology North Wales Training Programme has successfully retained trainees in consultant posts at Betsi Cadwaladr

University Health Board, establishing a sustainable dermatology service for the population of North Wales

- **Flexible Working:** HEIW has responded to increasing demand for less than full-time (LTFT) working, which is now undertaken by 30% of resident doctors. Working in partnership with Health Boards and Trusts, HEIW is embedding LTFT arrangements that improve doctors' working lives while mitigating service impact through enhanced rota planning
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion:** HEIW continuously reviews and monitors equality and diversity data to ensure training is fair and accessible. In response to differential attainment identified in some programmes, the GP Programme of Additional and Specialised Support (PASS) has been introduced. Early indicators demonstrate improved exam pass rates and reduced need for extensions to training
- **Professional Support Services:** The HEIW Professional Support Unit (PSU) provides targeted support to doctors, dentists, and foundation pharmacists across Welsh training programmes, addressing wellbeing and other professional challenges. In 2025, 591 individuals received support, with feedback indicating a positive impact on retention within NHS Wales
- **Speaking Up Safely and Workplace Safety:** HEIW works collaboratively with partners to embed 'Speaking Up Safely' initiatives, including a focus on sexual safety in the workplace. While long-term impact is still being evaluated, monitoring and reporting have been strengthened in partnership with NHS Wales Shared Services and Health Boards and Trusts
- **Educational and Competency Support:** HEIW provides access to study leave and targeted all-Wales training to ensure resident doctors acquire essential competencies. Examples include surgical boot camps, endoscopy training, ophthalmology simulation, cadaveric surgical skills courses, and exam preparation programmes

**Support for SAS Doctors:** Specialty, Associate Specialist, and Specialist (SAS) doctors (approximately 800 across NHS Wales) are supported through dedicated leadership by an Associate Dean and a network of SAS tutors. Resources are provided to support continuing professional development and ensure compliance with regulatory professional standards. Through these initiatives, HEIW not only enhances training quality and workforce wellbeing but also strengthens the sustainability and capacity of NHS Wales services.

**Educator and Trainer Support:** HEIW maintains a robust system to support medical educators and trainers. Activities include regular webinars, face-to-face trainer events, and conferences focused on wellbeing, personal development, and professional development in educator roles. Feedback from these initiatives is consistently positive and facilitates the sharing of best practice across Wales. Training capacity is planned to meet current and projected increases in trainee numbers. While UK data indicates higher rates of burnout among trainers, recruitment, engagement, and reported satisfaction in Wales remain high.

**Quality and Feedback:** HEIW is responsible for ensuring compliance with standards defined by the General Medical Council (GMC) and our Quality Management System (QMS) collates and monitors feedback from multiple sources, placing the learner voice at the centre of decision-making. This includes:

- Annual GMC national resident doctor and trainer surveys
- End-of-placement evaluations
- Complaints and concerns
- National and regional resident doctor fora

Wales consistently achieves the highest survey response rates in the UK (>90% for residents), providing rich data on the learning environment. GMC survey results show that 78–82% of resident doctors in Wales report satisfaction with their training, placing Wales in the top 30% of UK deaneries.

The QMS is supported by structured governance and escalation processes, ensuring that emerging issues are visible at Committee and Board level across HEIW and provider organisations (UHBs, Trusts, and GP practices). Quality concerns are managed through a four-stage process and where concerns persist, HEIW arranges Targeted Visits, resulting in detailed improvement plans, with enhanced monitoring imposed in conjunction with the GMC for cases requiring the highest level of oversight.

In 2025, HEIW conducted 36 Targeted Visits, all resulting in agreed action plans, with seven visits successfully de-escalated. Four departments are currently in enhanced monitoring: Internal Medicine (ABUHB), Cardiology (CVUHB), Cardiothoracic Surgery (CVUHB), and Emergency Medicine (Prince Charles Hospital, CTMUHB). Each department has detailed action plans with SMART objectives, regular review dates, and clear reporting to executive teams.

### **Medical Associate Professionals (MAPs)**

HEIW commissions training for Medical Associate Professionals (MAPs) and supports NHS Wales with recruitment, including Physician Associates, through streamlined processes.

The future strategic direction for MAPs, following the introduction of regulation by the General Medical Council in 2024 and the publication of the Leng Review in 2025, will be determined by the Leng Review Implementation Oversight Board, chaired by Welsh Government.

In the interim, HEIW continues to provide support for current students while pausing commissioning for the 2026/27 academic year to ensure alignment with forthcoming policy and regulatory frameworks.

To strengthen professional leadership and support, HEIW has appointed a MAPs Associate Dean to provide peer leadership across Wales and support the requirements associated with annual appraisal.

## Pharmacy

HEIW is responsible for planning, commissioning and quality management of education and training for the wider Pharmacy Workforce including Pharmacists, Pharmacy Technicians and Support Staff.

### Recruitment/Fill Rates

- The multi sector Foundation Programme has a 100% fill rate for 132 places in 2026/27. Two thirds of these graduates are from Welsh HEIs
- The Pre-registration Pharmacy Technician training programme also achieves a high fill rate at 95% in 2025/26 with increased opportunities in community and GP settings.
- Support staff development is also progressing well through the 'Access-To' programme, new pilots in Accuracy Checking and Medicines Management.

### Attrition

- As a result of targeted improvements by HEIW these are improving for the Pharmacist Foundation Training (from 10% to 3%) and for the Pharmacy Technician training programme (from 12% to 0%)

### Retention

- Retention from the Pharmacist Foundation programme into the HEIW-supported Post-registration Foundation Programme continues to strengthen, rising from 47% (2022/23) to 74% (2025/26).
- 98% (52 out of 53) of pre-registration pharmacy technicians completing their training in 2025 remained in Wales to work.

### Quality, Feedback and Support

- The Pharmacy Deanery captures learner feedback through a variety of mechanisms including study day feedback, end-of-rotation and programme surveys, as well as having clear routes for trainees to raise concerns.
- 73% of students feedback reported increased confidence as a direct result of their clinical placement.
- The new Post-registration Foundation programme has seen first-time pass rates rising from 38% to 70.5% following strengthened oversight and collaboration with Cardiff University.
- Pre-registration Pharmacy technician training remains robust, with programme completion rates ranging between 73% and 90% between 2018 to 2023, with more recent cohorts still in progress.
- Approximately 150 people completed the HEIW mental health first aid training in 2025 and this initiative was recognised nationally, being a finalist for the Healthcare Awards 2025.

### Supporting Current Workforce

- Training to support the delivery of expanded community pharmacy services, including prescribing and common ailment service (CAS), which now mandates 'Sore Throat Test and Treat' and 'Urinary Tract Infection

management'. In November 2025 alone, CAS delivered 41,564 consultations.

- The growing number of pharmacists qualifying as Independent Prescribers (IPs) enables more patients to receive care within community pharmacy, improving access and supporting system flow.
- HEIW commissions appropriate education and training for advanced practice and supporting pharmacists building consultant portfolios through the establishment of communities of practice. Pharmacist advance and consultant roles have been established in high impact service areas, such as mental health, cancer, antimicrobial and pharmacogenomics.
- To support the increase in pharmacy professionals working within the GP setting, the Pharmacy Deanery provide a GP transition training programme for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians.

## Dental

HEIW is responsible for the planning, commissioning, delivery, and quality management of education and training across the dental workforce, including dental nurses, hygienists, therapists, and dentists. This encompasses apprenticeship programmes, pre-registration training, and postgraduate development.

### Dental Hygiene and Dental Therapy

- HEIW commissions undergraduate dental hygiene and dental therapy programmes through Cardiff and Bangor Universities.
- Training capacity has increased in dental therapy, with 80% of graduates remaining and working in Wales within one year of qualification, strengthening workforce skills, supporting career progression, and improving patient access through a sustainable and flexible system.
- A Dental Therapy Foundation Programme supports new graduates in transitioning into general dental practice. Destination data indicates strong employment outcomes for therapists trained in Wales.
- HEIW has trained over 400 dental hygienists and therapists in exemptions to supply and administer specific prescription-only medications. 95% of practitioners report using this mechanism, leading to improved clinical decision-making, reduced reliance on dentists, enhanced skill mix, increased professional autonomy, and greater workforce sustainability.

### Apprenticeships

- **Dental Technology;** HEIW collaborates with the Centre for Dental Technology at Cardiff Metropolitan University on the Level 5 Dental Technology Apprenticeship, currently enrolling 11 apprentices across three-year cohorts, supporting a sustainable pipeline for this technical workforce.
- **Dental Nurse Training;** HEIW has implemented an updated apprenticeship framework and post-registration programmes to equip dental nurses with specialist skills in sedation, radiography, special care dentistry, and oral health education. While this has strengthened the

workforce pipeline, retention remains a challenge. Work has commenced on a transitional mentorship programme for newly qualified dental nurses alongside a wider retention plan.

## Dentists

- **Foundation:** HEIW delivers Dental Foundation Training (DFT), a one-year mandatory programme for newly graduated dentists wishing to work in NHS Wales (74 participants in 2025). Fifteen positions are targeted through incentivised recruitment to support rural areas, with 90–100% of participants intending to remain in Wales post-programme.
- **Core:** Post-DFT, early career dentists undertake Dental Core Training (DCT) in hospital or community settings, achieving an overall 94% fill rate.
- **Specialty:** Progression to Dental Specialty Training (DST) is available in 8 of 13 GDC-regulated specialties, with 30 trainees currently in post, the highest number in Wales to date.
- **Feedback:** Trainee feedback demonstrates high satisfaction: in 2024–25, 87% reported enjoying their posts, and 89% rated training quality as good or very good, with continued strong support from Training Programme Directors, Educational Supervisors, and HEIW.
- **International Dental Graduates:** HEIW also provides targeted support for International Dental Graduates, ensuring workforce integration and skill development.

## Supporting the Current Workforce

- HEIW has implemented a “Once for Wales” accreditation scheme for Dentists with Enhanced Skills (DES), transferring suitable Level 2 dental work from secondary to primary care settings.
- Since 2023, 29 dentists have been accredited in Oral Surgery, with DES accreditation also available in Paediatric Dentistry, improving patient access and service efficiency.

## Optometry

HEIW commissions higher qualifications for the optometry workforce, aligned with the Wales General Ophthalmic Services (WGOS), to strengthen service delivery and expand clinical capacity across Wales. Areas of focus include:

- Increase in commissioned qualifications enabling Health Boards to expand WGOS 3, 4, and 5 services including:
  - 118 Independent Prescribing (IP)
  - 131 Glaucoma
  - 180 Medical Retina
  - 90 Low Vision
- To date, IP services are available in 39% of practices and Low Vision in 64%, providing equitable access across Health Boards.

- WGOS 4 services remain patchy due to the staggered rollout, with gaps in Mid and North Wales largely attributable to geographic areas without optometry practices.
- Commissioned courses demonstrate high engagement and effectiveness, with average fill rates of 97% and an 81% completion rate.
- Advanced Training Practices (ATP) have expanded IP training capacity by 30% this year with consistently outstanding trainee and supervisor satisfaction.
- The IP peer review programme has supported 96 practitioners across 12 cohorts, receiving excellent feedback.
- HEIW has delivered prevention-focused training using the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) interactive programme, improving optometry workforce confidence in prevention conversations by 83%, supporting proactive patient care and service quality.

## Nursing and Allied Health Professionals Undergraduate Education and Training

HEIW commissions pre and post registration education and training for nurses, midwives, Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) and Health Care Scientists (HCS).

### Recruitment and Fill Rates

Recruitment to programmes is undertaken through tripartite working with Health Boards/Trusts, and education providers to maximise fill rates. Current recruitment data, for the 2025-26 academic session has generally been positive although there is variation between professions.

### Nursing

HEIW has commissioned an increasing number of nursing places in Welsh Universities over recent years to address the deficit position in this profession. Actual places filled for Year 1 in each field of nursing are shown on the following table

Field of Nursing	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Adult</b>	1,337	1,386	1,186	1,702	1,377
<b>Children</b>	162	179	154	178	192
<b>Learning Disability</b>	62	42	40	54	70
<b>Mental Health</b>	338	388	367	315	367
<b>TOTAL</b>	1,899	1,995	1,747	2,249	2,006

Table 3: Nursing places filled each year 2020 to 2025 by nursing field

These additional nurses have started to enter the workforce contributing to the reduction in vacancies and reduction in variable pay costs. Fill rates started to deteriorate in 2024/25 in line with UK trends reflecting a reduction in applications to nursing programmes.

Fill rates for the September entry cohort for 2025/26 are shown on the table below:

Professions	Autumn 2025	Recruited Position	Fill Rate
Adult	1,232	910	74%
Child	167	181	108%
Learning Disability	70	29	41%
Mental Health	329	242	74%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1,798</b>	<b>1,362</b>	<b>76%</b>

Table 4: Nursing places filled September 2025 by profession, including percentage fill rate

The March entry cohort is traditionally harder to recruit to, as this sits outside of the school / UCAS cycle. Of the 804 places commissioned for Spring 2026 the current fill rate estimate is 483 (55%), resulting in a potential position of c 1865.

Targeted nurse recruitment campaigns are undertaken each year, to maximise recruitment in a competitive environment. UCAS data shows the positive impact of that work, with Welsh nursing applications increasing by 13% in 2025 compared with 0 – 2% increases in other areas of the UK. Other initiatives undertaken by HEIW include:

- Open University pre-registration distance learning programme supporting workers progressing into nursing, used in Powys to support rural recruitment
- The 'HealthCare Connect' scheme
- Fasttrack to Nursing.

### Midwifery

Commissioned places for midwifery have also increased over recent years, and recruitment is consistently high, with fill rates consistently above 98% over the past 5 years:

Midwifery	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
<b>Count</b>	160	186	183	211	219
<b>Fill rate</b>	99%	101%	100%	107%	99%

Table 5: Commissioned midwifery places fill rate 2020 to 2025

This trend continues into 2025/26 with 217 recruits, a 98% fill rate.

### Allied Health Professions and Health Care Science

Most Allied Health professional and healthcare science education programmes meet or slightly exceed their recruitment targets. Exceptions that receive targeted attention include:

- Podiatry at 89% (24 of 27 recruited)
- Audiology at 75% (15 of 30) and
- Part-time PTP programmes at 40% (8 of 20)

### Attrition

Attrition rates from programmes are in a positive position as shown on the following table:

Profession	KPI %	Current performance %
Nursing	10	5.6
Midwifery	8	4.6
Allied Health Professions	8	4.8

*Table 6: Attrition rates of programmes KPI against current performance*

Benchmarking information demonstrates this is good performance, and results from initiatives such as

- expanding pastoral and wellbeing support
- personal tutoring provision
- facilitating the introduction of flexible routes that are aligned to School calendars to support students with parenting responsibilities to study

### Quality

HEIW supports commissioning with a structured performance and quality management framework designed to assure delivery, value for money, and learner outcomes. This includes

- Escalation and remedies where required with a focus on continuous improvement. Examples of current concerns are in Mental Health and Child Nursing and in some smaller specialist programmes
- Triangulation of information from multiple sources including National Student Survey (NSS) results, focusing on programmes that fall below the NSS threshold of 70%.
- Feedback from students, practice education facilitators, supervisors, and assessors to provide a comprehensive view of emerging themes and areas for improvement planning.
- Support from a network of 60 whole time equivalent (WTE) Practice Education Facilitators (PEF's) from a range of disciplines
- Quality management of clinical placements. In line with policy direction there has been a significant increase in the number of pre-registration placements in Primary and Community Care settings. Nursing students show a strong interest in a future career in primary care (73%)

### Education to Employment

There are positive levels of transition from education into employment.

- For the professions within the streamlining process, the four fields of nursing, operating department practitioners and midwifery – 100% of graduates from summer 2025 were allocated roles during the process.
- Of the 262 nursing students graduating in Spring 2026, 7 students are currently receiving ongoing support as part of the escalation process, and it is anticipated that they will all be offered suitable roles.

- For the professions outside the streamlining process (allied health professions and healthcare sciences) 532 bursary-supported students graduated in summer 2025, with an estimated employment rate of 85% in Wales.
- To secure increased retention in key professions new part time routes have been introduced, for example in Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy, to support current NHS Wales staff who want to progress.

## Post Registration Education

HEIW has also commissioned a range of post-registration education programmes, to widen All Wales opportunities for multi, cross, and up-skilling in line with service priorities. These include Independent Prescribing, Community Nursing Specialist Practitioner Qualification (SPQ) and Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (SCPHN), Critical Care, Genomics, Independent Authorisation of Blood Transfusion, Psychological Services and Ultrasound. The main challenge with these programmes is that take up is dependent upon staff release which can result in an unplanned underspend.

## Work Based Learning

HEIW develops work-based learning and apprenticeships to support a range of careers and is the health apprenticeship framework partner of Medr. While primarily supporting the healthcare support worker workforce, this approach is increasingly being applied to specialist and higher-level work-based learning (WBL) provision. Degree level health apprenticeships are not currently available in Wales. The review of the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales (SASW) being undertaken by Medr is likely to support progress in this area, and HEIW will be ready to respond to these developments.

## Enhancing Learner Voice

At the centre of the HEIW Quality Management system is the learner voice. As noted in the preceding sections local, regional and national surveys and learner forums across Wales provide regular feedback. These include sources such as the General Medical Council national training survey and the National Student Survey. HEIW also leads a number of initiatives to amplify the learner voice such as forums for professions such as the resident doctor think tank, Dental Trainee Forum and the Wales Health Student Forum. There are also multiple tools to enable responsive feedback anonymously or openly. Stronger internal governance arrangements are being developed to ensure that the learner feedback and any other intelligence is triangulated across professions and providers and appropriately escalated. To strengthen engagement, we are developing a Learner Engagement Framework which will increase visibility of learner voice at Board and develop 'close the loop' mechanisms for feedback.

## Welsh Language

Promoting increased Welsh language skills and usage is a core component of workforce education and is being achieved by:

- Embedding the Welsh language and “Active Offer” principles into curricula, placements and student support
- Providing opportunities for students to develop Welsh language awareness and skills appropriate to their profession and level of fluency
- Monitoring and assuring compliance through quality management processes, including reporting on Welsh-language provision and student experience.

## Speaking Up Safely (SUS)

HEIW launched the Raising Concerns Reflective Toolkit in 2024, aligned with the Speaking Up Safely Campaign. It is a digital resource designed to help healthcare students, trainees and work-based learners recognise, reflect on and safely raise concerns. This toolkit has been adopted by all universities who provide HEIW commissioned education and reporting mechanisms are in place to gather information on concerns raised.

## Working with Regulators

HEIW works closely with regulators, to ensure that education, training, and workforce development across NHS Wales align with professional standards, quality requirements, and patient safety expectations. With regard to postgraduate medical education GMC quality assurance outcomes have consistently demonstrated confidence in HEIW’s approach. Importantly, no local education provider in Wales has ever had training approval withdrawn by the GMC, reflecting the effectiveness of governance, oversight, and proactive quality management processes.

## Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

HEIW commissions and delivers a wide range of “Once for Wales” CPD and quality improvement (QI) initiatives that directly support the NHS Wales workforce and service priorities. Monitoring and evaluation of CPD is now facilitated by the Y Ty Dysgu Learning Management System which will inform future CPD provision. A substantial proportion of CPD takes place for the independent contractor workforce with a specific focus on clinical practice and we aim to maximise the benefit of this in the future to support Community by Design priorities.

## 2. Responding to the Changing Workforce Requirements

HEIW has initiated a wide range of programmes designed to get ahead of current workforce challenges, driving increasingly close integration with service and digital transformation to meet future needs. This is an area that needs careful prioritisation as the requests for HEIW delivery and leadership of national workforce solutions are significant. This prioritisation and associated de-prioritisation is undertaken by the Board through our IMTP process, to ensure that we deploy resources prudently.

### Recruitment and Retention

HEIW is responsible for national attraction campaigns that enable NHS organisations to recruit and employ staff locally. (Recruitment to education and training programmes is included in section 1)

#### Train Work Live

HEIW has continued to utilise Train Work Live (TWL) as a national strategic marketing and recruitment campaign targeted at priority areas. Whilst recognising there are multiple factors affecting recruitment, the estimated contribution of these campaigns is summarised below:

- **GP Training:** To address longstanding shortages in **GP trainee** recruitment the medical campaign has contributed to sustained high fill-rates with the Current GP trainee fill-rate at 96%
- **Medical Core Psychiatry:** To address 33% fill rates in 2017 the targeted TWL psychiatry campaign is associated with a dramatic improvement in recruitment outcomes, with year-on-year increases (79% in 2018) and currently at 100%
- **Dental:** Dental Foundation Training (DFT) and Dental Core Training (DCT) campaigns have been delivered to tackle known recruitment gaps, including the 15 unfilled DFT posts in 2022. The 2024/25 DFT fill-rate was 100% and a DCT fill-rate at 96%, outperforming the UK average of 89%
- **Undergraduate Nursing and AHP:** TWL support wider actions to increase participation in undergraduate programmes such as the Get into Nursing (GiN) attraction campaign. Early evaluation demonstrates material influence on applicants - 91% of surveyed students reported that the GiN influenced their decision to apply.

WG are currently evaluating the effectiveness of TWL, and we acknowledge the importance of maintaining an agile approach that delivers value for money.

#### Once for Wales Health Careers

Many partners are involved in this area of work. HEIW's unique contribution includes the following national campaigns:

- Development of the innovative digital Welsh and English language virtual villages 'Tregyrfa / Careersville' launched in 2020 aimed at 14–25-year-olds
- 'Your NHS, Your Career, Your Future', a framework which is building interest among 16–18-year-olds with campaigns consistently outperforming industry norms, with digital engagement that exceeds typical benchmarks. For example, the Get into Nursing Facebook click-through rate reached 18.43%, compared to a less than 1% industry standard

### **All Wales Retention Programme**

This HEIW-funded programme is now in its second year and involves all NHS organisations, using quality improvement (QI) approaches to address specific retention challenges. Although a Once for Wales programme it is a blended approach that recognises factors affecting retention vary locally. Impact is demonstrated through the National Retention Programme digital dashboard and the use of Statistical Process Control (SPC). Review of data from programme commencement in December 2023 to the most recent datasets in November 2025 demonstrates the following improvements:

- Reduction in national staff turnover rates (staff leaving NHS Wales). National turnover reduced by 1.3 percentage points, from 8.9% to 7.6%, representing a 14.6% relative decrease
- Reduction in voluntary resignation rates. Rates fell by 0.8 percentage points, from 4.7% to 3.9%, a 17% relative decrease
- Estimated retention impact. This equates to an estimated 1,167 staff retained between December 2023 and July 2025 who may otherwise have left.
- Improvements across multiple staff groups. Turnover reductions were observed across several workforce groups:
  - Nursing and Midwifery: reduced by 1.4 percentage points, from 7.2% to 5.8% (19.4% relative decrease)
  - Allied Health Professionals: reduced by 1.1 percentage points, from 7.3% to 6.2%
  - Healthcare Science: reduced by 1.6 percentage points, from 6.9% to 5.3% (23.2% relative decrease)
  - Additional Professional and Scientific Staff: reduced by 1.8 percentage points, from 11.2% to 9.4% (16.1% relative decrease)
- Financial impact. The programme has supported cost avoidance through reduced reliance on temporary and agency staffing, alongside lower training and onboarding costs

HEIW is currently reviewing how to maintain a focus on retention as the funding for organisational leads comes to an end in the next Quarter.

## Responsive Training Models

Alongside the core education and training programmes outlined in Section 1 HEIW is developing new models of training to keep pace with changing demands, shifting the balance of traditional provision.

### National Learning Management System – Y Ty Dysgu

HEIW continues to develop this national bi-lingual learning and education digital portal, launched in 2022, providing a single, accessible hub for education, training resources and professional development. This is a key vehicle for supporting increased need for virtual options to support high-quality, consistent learning and CPD by enabling healthcare staff and learners to access courses, share knowledge and develop skills aligned with workforce priorities in Wales. Y Ty Dysgu has replaced multiple legacy systems.

The platform now has over 35,000 active users, with consistent month-on-month growth of 3–4%, and hosts over 400 learning modules and 200 live events. A standardised approach is taken to evaluation to support more informed decisions about education design and investment.

Recent additions include: Women’s Health education, Perinatal Mental Health, NEST (Children’s rights), CAMHS, Childhood obesity, Health Inequalities (AHP), Person Centred Dementia Care and use of Medication and Genomics.

Y Ty Dysgu hosts the updated National Clinical Services Accreditation (NCSA) programme for community pharmacy, with the mandatory generic skills section now completed by over 7,000 users.

### Primary and Community Care Multi-Professional Education and Training

HEIW continues to provide sustained support and investment in the seven Primary Care Academies established across all Health Boards. These academies enable a multi-professional primary care workforce to develop the skills, capabilities, and confidence required to deliver high-quality care in community settings. This model represents a *Once for Wales* approach, ensuring national consistency while allowing delivery to be tailored to local population needs.

Delivery to date has focused on priority workforce areas, including the GP Nurse Foundation Programme; multi-professional competency and capability development for Urgent Primary Care and Musculoskeletal Services; and continuing professional development for the operational support workforce, including practice managers. This investment has delivered measurable outcomes across Wales, including:

- Support for 372 GP teams through four annual Practice Time for Learning events, embedding protected learning time within primary care
- Completion of the GP Nurse Foundation Programme by 83 nurses, strengthening place-based, preventative care aligned to the national GPN competency framework

- Appointment of six Integrated Care GP Fellows, delivering care focused on frailty and research within Hywel Dda University Health Board, while supporting GP recruitment and retention in rural areas
- Over 200 nursing students and 55 supervisors supported through GP and wider community placements, with increased demand for community-based roles following registration
- Delivery of more than 60 locally led programmes through Primary Care Academies, enhancing clinical capability for over 300 learners in areas such as women’s health and enhanced community care
- Strengthened peer support, education, and training through established networks for GP nurses, healthcare support workers, and practice managers

This work demonstrates a coordinated, scalable, and sustainable approach to primary care workforce development, supporting translation of national investment into improved capability, workforce resilience, and service delivery across Wales.

### **Endoscopy: The Endoscopy Academy of Wales**

The first phase of the Endoscopy Academy of Wales established in 2024 continues to deliver a range of training to the endoscopy workforce, with Joint Advisory Group (JAG) accreditation (awarded to high-quality gastrointestinal endoscopy services). It has adopted the 10 pathways training model, a multi-disciplinary training programme for endoscopists, endoscopy nurses, and healthcare support workers, managers, and administrative staff working in endoscopy services in Wales.

In 2024/25 the Academy delivered 34 training events, training 447 NHS Staff. This included 204 Nurses, 170 Medical & non-medical staff, and 73 Admin/Clerical staff.

This has resulted in a range of benefits including:

<b>Key Initiative</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Delivery of JAG courses for Endoscopists</b>	Maintaining a pathway for mandated training and accreditation for the Welsh NHS workforce
<b>HEIW programme for Clinical Endoscopists</b>	Supporting increased clinical endoscopist service delivery
<b>Delivery of regional endoscopic nurse training</b>	Addressing a backlog of training needs and developing the endoscopic nursing workforce
<b>Inaugural Transnasal Endoscopy (TNE) course</b>	Supporting new cross-specialty course innovation and service development
<b>Completion of Accelerated Endoscopy Training Pilot (Jan-March 2025)</b>	Evidencing that reduced training times by up to 45% delivers benefits for training and service
<b>Completion of North Wales Training Pilot</b>	Widening access to training and supporting plans for a regionalised delivery approach
<b>Securing funding to establish a sub-specialty training pathway for NHS Wales at Aneurin Bevan University Health Board in 2026</b>	Responding to urgent and imminent strategic workforce issues for two endoscopic subspecialties - Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography (ERCP) and Endoscopic Ultrasound (EUS).

2024/25 delivery focused on addressing a backlog of Health Board requests for Endoscopy Nurse training, to bring them up to JAG minimum requirements and to reduce course waiting times to maintenance levels.

In 2025 the academy delivered 12 courses to 105 NHS staff, with an average overall delegate course rating of 6.5 out of 7. Waiting lists for JAG accredited training, clinical endoscopists training and train the trainer programmes remain high.

Phase 2 of the academy has an ambition for three regional training centres across Wales, and a business case has recently been submitted. This will enable the introduction of accelerated training and a national training faculty to support sustainable course delivery.

## Clinical Skills Academy Development

Drawing on proven models from NHS Scotland Academy and the Copenhagen Academy for Medical Education and Simulation (CAMES), we are developing a proposal for a 'Clinical Skills Academy' for NHS Wales. This is a sustainable, medium to long term solution to issues affecting a variety of specialist areas across a range of fragile services. Benefits include:

- supporting upskilling, reskilling, multiskilling, and integrated multidisciplinary team working to ensure staff are supported to adapt to new ways of working
- a reduced reliance on insourcing and outsourcing which not only carries unwanted cost but also reduces the required capacity and case-availability for training programmes
- A centralised approach that delivers co-ordinated training to benchmark standards to improve standards, patient safety and consistency of outcomes

## Strategy Development

HEIW is developing strategies for education and research. The Board has agreed to phase these over two years given other more immediate demands on the organisation, but they will be essential for the longer term.

- **HEIW Education Strategy:** There is general recognition that the current approach to education and training will not be able to meet future needs and is unaffordable. A new strategy to drive reform and future focused approaches will be completed by the end of 2026. The following themes are clear from the evidence review and engagement to date:
  - Scaling inter-professional education and learning models
  - Focus on team learning and team working
  - Flexibility, generalism, focus on skills not roles
  - Ensuring that curricula reflects population health needs, prevention and the management of multi-morbidity
  - Use of simulation and immersive technology

- Expanding place-based learning in primary and community settings
- Widening access through a modernised approach to work-based learning and apprenticeship-style programmes
- Addressing variation in the delivery of programmes across Wales
- Transitioning people effectively into the workplace to reduce attrition and improve retention
- **Research Strategy;** This will be anchored to our unique functions, enhancing our skills and abilities in using research evidence to inform the decisions we make as well as establishing a role in undertaking primary research. We are also central participants in the PRIORITY II project, which is implementing the recommendations of the ‘Strategic Research Action Plan for Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals’.

## Supporting Development of Multi Professional Workforce

### Strategic Workforce Plans

As referenced in section 1, HEIW has progressed commitments in the Workforce Strategy to develop a number of strategic workforce plans, providing a short-to-medium-term set of actions to improve workforce sustainability, quality and productivity. These are all in various stages of implementation as outlined below:

### Primary Care Workforce Plan

Year 2 of a 5-year strategic workforce plan, working collaboratively with the Strategic Programme for Primary Care where over 60% of the agreed actions are being progressed. These include:

- Partnering with PHW and Deep End Cymru focusing on addressing health inequalities, education and training for clinical, administrative and support staff. This will drive stronger workforce capability, reduce unwarranted variation and improve care across deprived and underserved communities
- Partnering with Kings Fund to offer flexible digital leadership development and webinars aimed at Primary Care leaders at all levels, as well as developing a Clinical Leadership Immersive Programme locally
- Development of a Practice Manager Framework, due for launch in early 2026/27 and induction programmes for administrative and support staff
- All Optometrists and support staff (over 3,800 individuals) in Wales have completed a prevention module, Making Every Contact Count (MECC). Further interactive training and support from HEIW resulted in a marked increase (150%) in referrals to stop smoking services.
- Embedding retention initiatives across all development programmes, to support career progression and reduce staff turnover
- Development of a Primary Care Mental Health Framework, to help clinical, administrative and support staff to recognise and respond to the mental health needs of patients who present with other health problems.

### Genomics Workforce Plan

Year 1 of a 3-year implementation plan in conjunction with Genomics Partnership Wales. Key actions include:

- Progression of a Genomics Capability Framework to improve professional knowledge
- Collaborating with NHS England to develop genomics education to support a competency framework in advanced therapies
- Promoting awareness of genomics to all staff through Genomics Literacy Week which featured webinars on women's health, pharmacogenomics and stroke, diabetes, and mental health
- Working with HEI's to embed genomics content within undergraduate programmes

### Strategic Nursing Workforce Plan

Year 1 of a 5-year plan to develop the nursing workforce, and in support of the CNO's vision for nursing. Key actions include:

- **Leadership & Culture:** The "High Performing Teams – Train the Trainer" workshops have equipped over 450 nurses and midwives with practical leadership skills. Early evaluations showing a highly positive impact on workforce engagement and effectiveness
- **Education, Placements and Career Framework:** The development of a Nursing Career Framework is providing clear pathways for professional growth and retention. Framework publication scheduled for Q4 2025/26
- **Community Nursing Integration:** Future shape of community nursing underway to support Community by Design implementation
- **Workforce planning:** Nursing is at the forefront of the modelling approach being implemented by HEIW to inform future scenarios, education and recruitment activity

### Perinatal Workforce Plan

HEIW is in year 1 of this plan and has delayed launch to review the imminent Matneo Assurance Assessment to ensure any additional actions are picked up. Immediate priorities include:

- **Leadership & Culture.** HEIW, in partnership with Professor Michael West and Swansea Bay UHB, is developing a compassionate leadership programme focusing on collective clinical leadership, team working, and culture. In practice this will create more cohesive, confident teams leading to better outcomes for mothers and babies
- **Education and Training.** Commissioned education for sonography and a new Level 7 enhanced maternity care programme, introduced a Level III Diploma for Maternity Support Workers, and standardised the qualification in specialty for neonatal nurses, with publication planned in January 2026. These are all key to increasing staffing flexibility which will help units manage shortages in staff and surges in demand leading to better outcomes

- **Multi-Professional Development & Competency Frameworks.** HEIW is leading development of a multi-professional core competency framework in collaboration with NHS P&I, Welsh Risk Pool, and colleagues across Wales. Supporting implementation of [Birmingham Symptom-specific Obstetric Triage System](#) (BSOTS) Maternity Triage through a midwifery competency framework addressing skills not covered in pre-registration education

### **Mental Health Workforce Plan**

HEIW has nearly completed implementation of this three-year plan and is in discussion with WG policy leads regarding any further work to support the new mental health strategy. Positive progress has been delivered in the following areas:

- Targeted approaches to increase education, training, recruitment and retention have contributed to an overall increase of 220 staff working in mental health services over the last 2 years, with future benefits still in the education and training pipeline
- Turnover rates in key professions, such as consultant psychiatrists and mental health nurses, have dropped significantly (14.7% to 8.6% and 10.5% to 6.7%).
- Additional training for up to 20 social workers per year to qualify as Approved Mental Health Practitioners (AMHP)
- Extended CPD, postgraduate pathways, psychological therapies, and e-learning. Over 5,000 staff have enrolled in e-learning and commissioned programmes. 1,500 people have received psychological therapies training, and >700 trained in Solution Focussed Brief Therapy, with positive feedback and immediate practice changes
- Provided Team Manager Development training to over 90 individuals
- Mentoring arrangements are in place for over 100 people
- Roll out of collective leadership for patient safety programme underway
- Early positive signs of improvement from the NHS Wales Staff Survey

### **Healthcare Science (HCS) Programme**

HEIW has led this programme which has sought to build profile and understanding of these professions. Key achievements to date are detailed below:

- Published first comprehensive HCS professions framework in the UK with information on 100% of healthcare science professions.
- 94% (30/32) profession-specific career progression routes developed, ready for publication in January 2026
- Key education gaps mapped across full careers for 100% professions (32/32) and either resolved with education accessed or included in HEIW plans.
- First profession-specific research and innovation strategy in the UK published

- Positive contribution to HCS professions improved sense of feeling valued with a 47% reduction in turnover from 2024 to 2025, the largest relative improvement of all professional areas
- Health board registration policies are now in place in 3 health boards and in development in a further 3

### **The Strategic Allied Health Professions (AHP) Workforce Development Plan**

HEIW developed this plan to identify short term actions to address workforce challenges for these professions with progress in the following areas:

- Development of Multi-professional Supervision Hub launched across Wales. In 10 months the hub has engaged over 2,000 users with more than 6,600 visits
- Recruitment, Attraction and Enhanced Opportunities for [AHP](#) Support Workers
- Initiatives to promote leadership development - 55% increase in applications for the Wales Clinical Leadership Training Fellowship and 192% increase for the Advance Clinical Leadership Programme
- Workforce planning support through a multiprofessional 'one stop shop' resource which has received over 1000 workforce engagement interactions since its launch in Oct 2025
- Established a national Early Years Health Inequalities network with 100 active members, equipping AHPs to lead prevention, early intervention, and the reduction of health inequalities across Wales

### **Workforce Solutions for National Programmes**

Close working with national programmes has enabled HEIW to progress several All-Wales solutions to immediate workforce challenges that affect service delivery and quality. These are informed by clinical and operational engagement with NHS colleagues from Health Boards and Trusts. Notable areas of focus are outlined below:

- **Theatre (perioperative) Workforce Development** - completed a baseline assessment of the theatre workforce to inform opportunities to improve workforce planning, education and training and leadership development in these settings. Baseline workforce information is already being used to consider alternative workforce solutions, working with a number of relevant staff groups (including orthopaedics, anaesthetics, pharmacy). Regional workshops have been delivered to develop an appropriate education offer for peri-operative staff and a leadership programme has been accessed by perioperative staff
- **Cancer:** in recognition of the key role of specialist cancer nurses in the quality and experience of cancer patients HEIW aims to introduce the ACCEND (Aspirant Cancer Career and Education Development) Framework in NHS Wales from 2026. This will upskill the specialist cancer workforce, providing the skills to work as part of multi-professional teams
- **Urgent and Emergency Care:** The multi professional Urgent Care Practitioner Competency Framework has been completed and is currently

being evaluated by users and will enhance workforce redesign and sustainable solutions. Learning resources are being developed and updated to support staff to deliver effective, high-quality care through the urgent and emergency care pathways (e.g. acute frailty, optimising patient flow, verification of expected deaths)

- **Palliative and End of Life Care:** The all-Wales Competency Framework was launched in October 2025. E-Learning resources will be made available for use across Wales in the next phase. The framework and e-Learning resources will enable staff to identify areas for learning and to access relevant training and improve standards of care
- **The Women's Health e-Learning Hub:** HEIW has supported the development of the Women's Hubs through development of educational resources that will be available on Y Ty Dysgu

## Digital Skills

A core strategic focus of the Workforce Strategy is to build a digitally enabled workforce, Key elements of progress in this area include:

- **Digital Capability Framework (DCF):** HEIW has designed and built a national self-assessment tool for staff to assess their own digital skills. Over 2,000 DCF self-evaluations have been completed, leading to targeted education and integration with professional processes
- **Leadership and eLearning Programmes:** Digital is embedded across all leadership development programmes, equipping staff with the skills to lead in a digital age
- **Management Competency Framework:** We are working closely with NHS England to ensure digital and data literacy will be a mandatory, staged competency for all managers, with curriculum development underway to embed digital leadership at every level leading
- **Efficiency Through Technology:** Internal programmes to maximise the use of digital tools, develop digital champions and share best practice
- **Commercial Partnership with Tektology:** HEIW's is working in partnership with Tektology to strengthen our system-wide digital capability by developing and then applying a *graduated capability model*. This is a tiered framework that maps progression from foundational digital literacy to advanced digital leadership. The model, drawn from global best practice, will align with clinical accreditation and revalidation requirements and provides a structured, scalable approach to developing a digitally confident workforce. This approach directly supports delivery of the **NHS Wales Digital Blueprint**, ensuring digital capability development is integrated with operating model redesign, workforce planning and service transformation across Wales
- To support the **NHS Wales Mental Health and Wellbeing Digital and Data Implementation Plan (2025–2028)**, Tektology's work also includes detailed mental health use case modelling, as part of the demonstrating how

digital skills uplift can be targeted to specific services and roles, to shape tailored upskilling pathways

- **AI and genomics education frameworks** are being implemented through foundational modules and pilots. including innovative approaches such as “Use AI to Learn AI” - HALI. This is a smart, conversational AI tool created to support NHS Wales staff in applying AI technologies in clinical and operational settings. HALI is accessed via Ty Dysgu: <https://ytydysgu.heiw.wales/>
- **Simulation-based education** HEIW’s simulation work is driving forward innovation and quality in this increasingly important area of education and training that plays a vital role in the development of a safe, high-quality, NHS workforce. Simulation education and CPD activity has reached over 500 learners and stakeholders, including 165 attendees at the 2025 national conference, and 227 simulation faculty trained since 2022. This work is underpinned by national and international collaboration on development of simulation standards which are now being promoted across Wales, and foundational work to support future innovation in immersive and simulation-based education

## NHS Wales Staff Survey

HEIW has continued to improve and evolve the national staff survey which has just completed its third round with a response rate rising from 20.7% in 2023 to 30% in 2025, equating to 34,645 individual staff voices. Lessons learned from the first year of the survey have been invaluable in helping HEIW to provide a continuously improving service for NHS organisations, taking on board feedback while maintaining a focus on a Once for Wales system.

With improving response rates, the data and insights will inform organisations and the system about how best to improve staff experience and engagement, supporting recruitment and retention. From a strategic workforce perspective the findings will continue to inform the pay review body evidence and shape the education training plan with opportunities to inform national work on workplace safety, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) through the Workforce Equality Standard (WES) and leadership development, all of which are central to fostering positive workplace cultures.

Our responses to student and trainee surveys are included in Section 1 – under Enhancing Learner Voice.

### **3. Improving the Leadership and Operational Capability and Capacity of NHS Wales**

HEIW's system lead and system delivery role in this area is continuously evolving in response to changes and new priorities, requiring flexibility and creative use of resources. Success has been dependent on effective collaboration with NHS organisations so that we have a coordinated and consistent approach at local and national level. The appetite and interest in a Once for Wales approach has increased, as confidence in new national provision has grown, presenting opportunities to accelerate progress in the next few years.

#### **Capability and Capacity Gap**

When HEIW was established in 2018, there were no All-Wales leadership and management development programmes for NHS Wales, and no underpinning strategy or principles. In line with the NHS Wales Succession and Talent Strategy, HEIW has focused over the last five years on establishing consistent, national leadership development offers in priority areas underpinned by compassionate leadership principles. These include very senior leaders (Tiers 2 and 3), advanced clinical leadership, board induction, the Graduate Management Programme, and programmes targeted at addressing equality, diversity and inclusion.

More recently, increased demand and evidence from external reviews and system feedback have highlighted further leadership capability and capacity gaps, particularly below executive level. These include operational managers, clinical and ward-based multidisciplinary teams, perioperative services and colleagues working in primary care, where leadership capability has historically been variable and access to development opportunities inconsistent. In response, HEIW has expanded the scope of its leadership function to address these emerging needs, strengthen leadership capacity across the system, and mitigate risks to service delivery, workforce stability and succession planning.

#### **Leadership and Management Standards**

The National Management and Leadership Competence Framework is due to be launched imminently by NHS England and if adopted this will transform the current approach in NHS Wales and will represent a substantial work programme for the next few years. HEIW has been representing the views and requirements of NHS Wales within this process.

As well as a Code of Practice, the competence framework will provide clear expectations of all managers and leaders, providing a new baseline for assessing the capacity and capability gap.

These align with the competence and success profiles that have been developed by HEIW over recent years to provide the evidence base for existing All Wales Leadership

Programmes (CEO, Executive Director, Deputy Director and Graduate Management level).

We anticipate that this will drive a renewed focus on Once for Wales solutions at all levels, especially if professional regulation follows.

We will be completing a roll out plan during this Quarter and are working with the Chartered Management Institute who have been playing a leading role in the development of the Framework.

## Developing Appropriate Leadership Programmes

Current leadership programmes available within NHS Wales are outlined below:

- **Aspiring Chief Executive (ACE) Programme:** Two cohorts completed with 11 participants. The next programme has been paused in favour of broader access to development for the wider Executive Director pool in 26/27
- **Aspiring Executive Director Talent Pool:** This was open to applicants from all professional backgrounds with experience at deputy or assistant level. A robust selection process led to the first cohort of 40 individuals who have recently completed the programme
- **"Stepping into Senior Leadership Pilot Programme":** To build a diverse talent pool for future Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic senior leaders. This is currently being piloted with 22 participants and should enable NHS Wales to start to address findings from the Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) findings
- **National induction programme and CPD offer for NHS Wales Board Members:** Co-designed with WG and the NHS Wales Corporate Services Group this is a programme to strengthen governance. 2 cohorts completed for 46 new board members both Executive and Non-Executive
- **Enhanced multidisciplinary leadership development:** HEIW has integrated academic accreditation into clinical leadership programmes, using work-based assessments to ensure immediate relevance for clinical leaders. Over 400 senior clinical leaders have participated in national programmes, resulting in 50 promotions. HEIW has also supported 3 cohorts of Florence Nightingale Scholars and enhanced the Wales Clinical Leadership Fellowship (WCLF) programme
- **Local Focus:** In parallel, HEIW is supporting Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to establish a sustainable local clinical leadership model
- **Graduate Management Programme:** This programme offers an entry pathway for individuals without clinical backgrounds to fast track their development into NHS management and leadership. We have recruited to 4 cohorts of this 2 year programme with between 15 and 20 trainees in each programme, allocated to all NHS organisations

### Areas under development in 2025/26:

- **Operational Management:** Previously, there has been no national coordinated approach to leadership development for operational managers in NHS Wales. HEIW is addressing this with the design and delivery of a national, multi-disciplinary leadership programme, starting with Bands 6 to 8A. The pilot is completed and the plan for roll out is being developed by the end of Q4, subject to resources
- **Primary Care leadership development:** HEIW is also advancing a sustainable, stratified scalable leadership offer for primary care through a co-designed and collaborative approach. In Quarter 4, we will launch leadership development programmes tailored to the primary care workforce
- **Service specific:** Leadership development is a core aspect of several of the strategic workforce plans providing an opportunity to try out different approaches that are more suited to operational and multi-disciplinary teams

HEIW provides a range of resources to support these formal programmes but also on an open access basis for all leaders and managers. [Gwella](#), is an online learning and development platform developed by HEIW to strengthen leadership and management capability across the Welsh health and care system. The platform has expanded significantly, providing digital tools, hubs and learning pathways that help organisations embed compassionate, collaborative leadership at scale. Typically, it has around 42,000 views a month with 9,000 registered users.

## Evaluation and Impact of Leadership Programmes

HEIW uses a structured evaluation framework, underpinned by Kirkpatrick methodology, across its national leadership programmes to assess quality, reach and impact. This combines participant feedback, independent academic input and tracking of career progression and role outcomes. Evidence shows these programmes are strengthening leadership capability across NHS Wales, with participants reporting improved confidence and application of learning in practice, and a demonstrable pipeline into senior clinical, managerial and executive roles that supports succession planning and reduces reliance on external recruitment. Leadership priorities and programme focus will increasingly be informed by NHS Wales Staff Survey intelligence, enabling HEIW to target development activity in response to emerging themes in leadership behaviours, culture, and staff experience. Evaluation findings are actively used to refine programme design, improve accessibility and align investment with system priorities.

### Key Outcomes:

- **Aspiring Chief Executive (ACE) Programme:** 2 participants have progressed to NHS Wales Chief Executive roles. 3 have undertaken interim roles
- **Aspiring Executive Director Talent Pool:** 14 of the first cohort have advanced to executive roles. An alumni network is being formed to support ongoing development

- **Graduate Management Programme:** Of the two cohorts that have graduated, 34 of the 36 trainees remain employed in NHS Wales

## 4. Strengthening the Organisation

As an organisation that has been established to deliver benefit and added value to the NHS system, maintaining robust internal arrangements to manage our people, plans, performance and finance helps us maximise the time and attention we can spend on delivering support, services and impact for NHS Wales.

### Measures to Drive Efficiency/Productivity

**Education and Training:** 84% of what HEIW spends relates to education and training. Much of this is channeled through contractual arrangements which have been subject to competitive procurement and where costs are largely based on nationally agreed tariffs aligned with Student Finance arrangements. Contracts include performance measures for areas such as attrition to ensure that waste is minimised. Allocations to Health Boards and Trusts for postgraduate and post registration programmes are closely monitored through commissioning arrangements, detailed updates and financial returns. The most important focus for HEIW in relation to education and training spend is on value and impact, ensuring that the investment in the pipeline ultimately maximises the benefit to the NHS workforce. The increased pipeline has contributed to the reduction in agency costs across professions but particularly in relation to nursing. A recent report by Audit Wales also concluded that HEIW's planning and contracting approach has a good focus on actions that will add value for students and, ultimately, for NHS Wales. The organisation recognises that there is further work to do to assess and communicate the impact and value of its education investments to help guide future priorities.

**Digital First Organisation:** Implementation of the HEIW Digital and Data Strategy is driving efficiency improvements in a number of areas, for example, the new "Codi" platform which transforms multiple workforce systems into a single modern platform for resident doctors, foundation dentists, trainee pharmacists and other clinical professionals. Codi will support over 10,000 users and the first phase will provide the following benefits:

- Modernise ways of working – improving efficiency effectiveness and user experience
- Streamline processes, improve data quality, providing a trusted source of workforce intelligence for HEIW and Health Boards
- Improved compliance with cyber and technology standards
- Planned financial savings of £276,000 per year in licence savings, funding key digital and data developments for the system
- Reduction in manual input requirements, releasing over 300 hours per month in efficiency gains

**Operating Model review:** This is underway to reshape systems, processes, ways of working to get the best value from our people and minimise bureaucracy and waste. It will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Hybrid working model and fully

exploit the digital solutions that are already available. An external partner is supporting this work bringing an independent perspective and challenge to ensure HEIW continues to add value to NHS Wales and future challenges. Stakeholder feedback will be a core part of the next phase.

**Procurement:** A new Venue and Event Hire Contract has secured savings of over £100k using an expert intermediary organisation to secure advantageous rates for our education and training sessions.

**Audit Wales:** Review of Cost Improvement Arrangements (Sept 2024) concluded that HEIW has sound arrangements for identifying, delivering, and monitoring its cost improvement opportunities. This recognised that the scope to secure cost improvements is largely determined by the volume of training places being commissioned on behalf of NHS Wales, and that HEIW:

- Has a good understanding of its cost drivers
- A robust approach to the monitoring and oversight of its financial position and cost improvement requirements

## Resilience – Recruitment/Retention and Staff Wellbeing

**HEIW Workforce:** As of December 2025, HEIW has a workforce of 494 FTE and a headcount of 675 comprising 518 core and 157 sessional members.

The core workforce brings together a wide breadth of experience across a multidisciplinary team, combining strong educational, clinical and professional expertise with operational, project and corporate management skills.

The sessional workforce, particularly GP educators, form a core component of the medical education workforce, contributing significantly to the delivery of high-quality education, training, supervision, and assessment across Wales, for undergraduate and postgraduate learners.

**Metrics:** Overall HEIW has a resilient workforce supported by strong performance across key people metrics:

- **Sickness absence:** The rolling 12-month sickness rate at the end of December 2025 was 2.91%, remaining consistently below the NHS Wales target of 4.2%
- **Turnover:** Our turnover is 9.7% for the core HEIW workforce indicating a stable workforce. It increases to 14% when the Graduate Management Trainees, Interns and Clinical Fellows are included given the fixed term nature of their contracts.
- **Performance appraisal (PADR):** PADR compliance for core staff was 83.4% at the end of December 2025 (84.79% including sessional staff), providing assurance on performance management and development

- **Statutory and mandatory training:** Compliance for core staff was 90.06%, exceeding the Welsh Government target of 85%, supporting safe and effective service delivery

**Flexibility:** Use of agency or interim staff is limited and targeted. The organisation has deliberately strengthened its substantive core workforce, which now accounts for around three quarters of the total workforce. The remaining quarter are secondees, fixed-term appointments and sessional staff, which reflect the high proportion of time limited projects and programmes, as well as non-recurrent funding arrangements. For example, as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025, HEIW has 52 staff (28.33 FTE) on secondment from across NHS Wales. There are mutual advantages to this in terms of skills development and shared expertise, and it is essential for HEIW to retain a level of flexibility given non recurrent funding. However, it does have to be actively managed to avoid disruption and a lack of continuity within teams.

HEIW will have completed an Internal Workforce Plan by the end of the 25/26 to ensure that we can continue to deliver our plans and priorities effectively and to embed resilience. This is a key part of our work on the operating model.

**Recruitment:** There are few hard to fill vacancies, in particular within the Digital Directorate, which can be challenging due to industry comparators. The main recruitment risk exists at Executive Director level due to pay relativities and alignment with other organisations. We are fortunate to recruit from a strong pool for Independent Members with thirty applicants for a recent vacancy.

**Staff Wellbeing:** HEIW has supported staff wellbeing through flexible working and hybrid working arrangements, access to health and wellbeing support, and development opportunities. Our staff run an active Social Committee which has a significant impact on morale and a sense of belonging and we have continued to review our working environment to make this as positive and productive as possible. Staff feedback consistently reflects strong engagement and satisfaction.

## Leadership Development and Succession Planning

The following opportunities are provided for HEIW staff:

- Senior leaders are encouraged to access the national offers that are available to all NHS staff and a number of professional and senior leaders have benefited from these programmes
- Targeted development programmes for key strategic and leadership skills – most recently Warwick Business School supporting development of capability in Three Horizons Model
- 6 monthly HEIW All Staff Conference provides a structured space for shared learning, cross directorate collaboration and personal development, and staff have opportunities to present and promote their work at the fortnightly online staff forum

- Internal management development programmes and opportunities including a project and programme management network. These will be refocused in line with the new Operational Model

Succession planning arrangements need to be strengthened as part of the internal workforce plan. While there have been positive examples of individuals being promoted to senior leadership and Executive roles, more work needs to be done to avoid single points of failure and address very senior leadership succession planning, given the relatively small size and specialist nature of the organization.

## **Actions Taken Following the Most Recent Staff Survey**

HEIW has achieved a high year-on-year participation rate across NHS Wales in the Staff Survey, with 92.9%. Directorate-level ownership and ongoing engagement have supported this achievement.

Following the 2024 results, HEIW identified actively investing in the following areas of focus with targeted initiatives:

- **Workload management and work-life balance:** Strengthening colleagues' skills and resilience through focused learning and development activities, including a session focused on burnout and resilience at the staff conference
- **Hybrid working and flexibility:** Developed evidence-based principles and resource pack to support a hybrid working approach that includes weekly team anchor days to strengthen relationships and balances remote and in person working enabled through clear expectations and leadership
- **Career development and talent management:** Building colleagues' skills and capability to support career progression, hold meaningful PADR conversations and support to strengthen readiness for future roles

Colleagues are engaged through the monthly Staff Forum, Social Committee activity, a regularly updated intranet, as well as annual events and learning series. These channels strengthen staff voice, connection, and engagement.

Governance and oversight are maintained through a monthly Staff Survey Leads Working Group, directorate-level accountability, and organisation-wide engagement.

## **HEIW Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) 2024: Progress and Actions**

HEIW's 2024 WRES report highlighted some positive progress including metrics relating to bullying, harassment and discrimination together with improved staff survey completion rates. However, the report also identified areas requiring more focused attention including:

- improving recruitment processes – as white applicants remain seven times more likely to be appointed following interview
- declaration of ethnicity and diversity data, as declaration rates have only improved marginally

- training compliance – as access to our mandatory anti-racism training via ESR is below the NHS average (80% compared with 95%)

In response we are implementing a small number of targeted actions in relation to our recruitment process, learning from other organisations.

### **Strategic Equality Plan (SEP)**

Our SEP includes objectives related to our wider functions and system impact, including increasing diversity in senior leadership pools and addressing differential attainment in education and training programmes.

### **Finance and Planning**

Since it was established, HEIW has a strong track record of operating within its available funding, remaining at routine escalation and submitting approvable plans to Welsh Government.

**Financial Delivery:** The Board and Executive Team receive regular reports covering financial and other key aspects of performance. As education commissioning data has improved over the last 5 years, the previous pattern of underspending has reduced, as a result of a greater ability to foresee and respond to changes. Small fluctuations still happen, and the Board has a high-risk appetite ensuring that investment is optimised for the NHS Wales workforce.

The costs of delivering education and training are largely based on set fees/costs such as tuition fees, salary reimbursement and eligible bursary support. Most education and training places are commissioned through the approved ETP and so a large proportion of expenditure, incurred by HEIW, is determined through this mechanism.

The ETP for the 2025-26 year included funding of £294.224m. This represents 84% of the overall revenue funding approved in the Remit Letter, which totalled £349.178m.

**Revenue position:** At the end of December 2025, a surplus was reported (£0.48m), with a forecast position of breakeven at the year-end. This is after reporting a surplus of c£1m and returning funding to WG - of £1m (0.25% of annual budget), for the 2025-26 financial year. Funding has been returned due mainly to HEI under-recruitment in some programmes, including nursing as outlined in Section 1.

Within the core funding allocation for 2025-26, it was recognised that HEIW had commissioned and delivered additional activities for the NHS which had been funded through in-year funding flexibility in previous years and now needed to be formally recognised in the core allocation. Continuing this investment of £4m has enabled the following activities to be undertaken during 2025-26:

- NHS Wales Graduate Management Scheme to continue developing future leaders and managers,
- Operational Managers Programme – Design, development and pilot cohort – implement and test a programme for operational managers, linked to the

forthcoming competency framework and support delivery of WG priorities (e.g. access to care)

- Strategic workforce plans to be developed and implemented for nursing and perinatal workforce
- Expanding the Digital Capability Framework and developing an AI Education Framework to support a more digitally enabled workforce
- Expansion of clinical leadership programmes, expanding diversity in leadership pipelines through access to new programmes and resources
- A national induction programme and CPD offer for board members in NHS Wales
- Strategic review and design of post-graduate healthcare professional education
- Strengthen contract management arrangements to deliver continuous improvement through better quality and performance management
- Expansion of professional support unit, to provide a service to all postgraduate trainees
- Implementation of the Mwy Na Geiriau (More Than Just Words) strategy

Each of these links directly to objectives within HEIW's IMTP 2025-28 and respond to priorities set out in the remit letter.

**Capital position:** HEIW is forecasting a breakeven position for the financial year against a budget of £1.56m. This includes investment in CODI and IT refresh programme (£1.4m).

**Planning:** The IMTP sets the organisation's priorities for the next 1 to 3 years, responding to priorities in the annual Remit Letter and making progress towards the strategic themes in the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy (2020-2030). Working collaboratively with external stakeholders, the IMTP is the basis for prioritising and allocating resources. The full Board is involved in the development of the IMTP during a 6-month period in formal and informal sessions. The process for development of the Education and Training Plan which is a sister plan to the IMTP is set out in Section 1.

**Performance Framework:** The board approved an updated framework in May 2025, which uses performance information to provide assurance on delivery of the IMTP objectives and key internal organisational performance. This Framework has helped establish a more robust set of performance management arrangements through the organisation, including the approach to escalating and addressing performance concerns. Greater transparency has enabled an improved approach to delivering priorities and providing the appropriate assurance to board members.

**Audit Assurance:** Audit Wales Structured Assessment (November 2025) commented that "HEIW has robust governance, planning and financial arrangements. Members and officers are engaged, and scrutiny and oversight remain strong".

It also confirms that:

- HEIW remains at the lowest level – routine monitoring – within WG’s Escalation and Intervention Framework
- The Integrated Medium-Term Plan 2025-28 was considered approvable by WG
- HEIW met its key financial objectives and duties for the 2024-25 financial year

7 Internal audits have been completed by Internal Audit at the time of writing. 4 were assessed as substantial – IT arrangements, the Revalidation Support Unit, Corporate Governance arrangements and monitoring of services commissioned by health boards. 3 were assessed as reasonable – finance capital expenditure, Train Work Live and implementation of the workforce plan for mental health.

**Board Assurance and Oversight:** The Board members self-assessment for 2024/25 provided positive feedback on the role and functioning of the Board, with some key actions for implementing during the year, for example, the revision of our Performance Management Framework to include an increased focus on impact, value and outcomes.

The Board self-assessment for 2025-26 is currently underway and the results will be considered in a report to March Board. Self-assessments for our committees will commence in February.

The Board is supported by the Audit & Assurance Committee, the Education Commissioning and Quality Committee and the Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee. These are assessed as working effectively to support the Board in its role. ECQC specifically scrutinises and oversees significant procurements, quality reports and development and delivery of the ETP to provide assurance to the board.

The improved availability of workforce data and intelligence referred to elsewhere in this evidence pack enable this to be actively used by the Board to scrutinise delivery and trends as well as to triangulate different sources of data to assure validity, A recent internal review of quality in relation to education and training in maternity and neonatal services used data from various sources to test the quality management approach and identify areas for improvement.

The Board Assurance Framework is actively considered on an annual basis, supported by discussions about risk appetite.

The Corporate risk register is used as a live management tool by the Executive Team and the wider Board to ensure that emerging risks are discussed alongside strategic operational options. A number of the risks have a potential system impact and require close working with other partners to resolve or mitigate.

This means that when options are presented to the Board – for example the ETP or IMTP – the current and forecast risk profile is already integrated into the decision-making environment.

## 5. National Issues

We would highlight the following strategic considerations for the Panel's discussion:

- **Strengthening long-term national workforce planning:** There is a significant opportunity to improve the quality and confidence of long-term workforce planning through enhanced workforce data, analytics, and modelling capability. This will be supported by the establishment of the NHS Workforce Supply Oversight Group and strengthened partnership working, including engagement with World Health Organisation communities of practice, to ensure alignment with international best practice.
- **Managing short-term supply and demand pressures:** In 2026, we will be coordinating collaborative action with other NHS organisations to address any short-term mismatches between graduate supply and available vacancies.
- **Reform and transformation of education and training:** Medical Education Reform will be driven at pace at UK level and it will be important to consider implications for Wales at every stage. The HEIW Education Strategy will be an important opportunity to stimulate new thinking about education and training across all professions.
- **Impact of financial constraints on education and training capacity:** There are likely to be bottlenecks within medical training pathways this year given financial constraints on next phase of expansion.
- **Implications of the UK Leadership and Management Framework:** The introduction of the UK Leadership and Management Framework will drive an expansion in HEIW's role and remit in relation to leadership and management development across the NHS.
- **Better alignment and coordination of national workforce roles and priorities:** To avoid duplication HEIW will be developing clearer MOUs with NWSSP and P&I so that roles and responsibilities are clear, and to encourage collaborative approaches.