

WELSH GOVERNMENT INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Title of proposal:	NHS WALES PLANNING FRAMEWORK 2026-2029
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SECTION 1. WHAT ACTION IS THE WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING AND WHY?

This impact assessment seeks to demonstrate how the NHS Wales Planning Framework issued in 2025 for the planning period 2026-2029 can contribute to the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of Wales; and how it might affect Wales and the people who live here, positively or negatively.

Introduction

The NHS Wales Planning Framework 2026-2029 (planning framework) is issued to provide the NHS Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts in Wales with 'Directions' from Jeremy Miles, Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care, on what they should focus on in their Integrated Medium-Term Plans (IMTP's). IMTP's are statutory requirements. The planning framework provides the context and environmental landscape upon which the NHS plans should be developed.

The requirement to prepare an Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP) stems from section 175 of the 2006 Act, as amended by the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014. Section 175(1) of the 2006 Act requires health boards to ensure their expenditure of funds given to them "break even" over a three-year accounting period, subject to a degree of leniency determined by Welsh Ministers.

Welsh Ministers are required by the amended section 175(2) to give directions to a Local Health Board requiring it:

- (a) to prepare a plan which sets out its strategy for securing that it complies with the duty under subsection (1) while improving—
 - (i) the health of the people for whom it is responsible, and
 - (ii) the provision of health care to such people
- (b) to do such other things as appear to be requisite to secure that it complies with that duty.

While section 175 only applies to Health Boards, using powers to direct NHS trusts set out in section 19(1) of the 2006 Act, the Welsh Ministers have effectively imposed the same reporting obligations on NHS trusts.

National organisations and Special Health Authorities: Health Education Improvement Wales and Digital Healthcare Wales are not under any obligation to complete an IMTP, however, along with other national organisations (including the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership), they do so by way of adopting the framework as a means by which to direct their planning.

The NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (JCC) was established in April 2024. While last year they submitted a foundational annual plan, this will be the first year the JCC will develop and submit an integrated plan. [NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee](#)

The NHS Executive, established on 1 April 2023, was renamed the NHS Wales Performance and Improvement (NHS P&I) on 1 June 2025. NHS P&I support the robust analysis of NHS plans, once submitted. Using its knowledge and operational understanding of the NHS Wales, its analysis feeds into the overall assurance process. This planning framework is key to ensuring organisations understand the importance of this governance and the focus on stability and improvement. [Home - NHS Wales Performance and Improvement](#)

The planning framework is issued annually, to provide the context and 'directions' to organisations with NHS Wales as to what their three-year IMTPs should focus on and the process that they will be subject to. The planning framework sets out the Cabinet Secretary's expectations, with the NHS Wales Chief Executive writing to NHS organisations setting out the submission arrangements, whereby the plans are submitted to Welsh Government. These arrangements include a description of the robust assessment process and the subsequent approval arrangements. It should be noted that the decision process may be impacted by the Senedd elections, and the monitoring of those plans will be agreed once the elections have concluded.

Over the last few years, the NHS has continued to focus on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as continuing to commission and provide health care services, including responding to people with urgent, emergency, and essential health conditions. The current financial challenges that the system is experiencing because of COVID and inflationary pressures means that the NHS continues to operate in a challenging environment, despite additional investment provided by Welsh Government. As in previous years, the NHS still needs to plan but this planning framework recognises that position and provides further clarity around the Cabinet Secretary's high-level ambition for the health and care system. It states that resources must be optimised and offers identified specific priorities for the NHS to focus on delivering.

The framework sets out the strategic priorities that must be delivered by all health boards and (where relevant) other NHS organisations over the next three years. The strategic priorities are:

- Timely Access to Care
- Population Health and Prevention
- Community by Design
- Mental Health Access
- Women's Health
- Quality and Safety

The overarching aim of the Planning Framework is to ensure that NHS organisations plan to improve the health outcomes of their populations, within the resources available to them. More specifically, the framework sets out the delivery expectations which are

required in each of the above strategic priority areas. In addition, it sets out a number of enabling actions which are being mandated on an 'adopt or justify' basis. These are the product of the National Strategic Programmes and the Value and Sustainability Board.

The enabling actions are mandatory, focusing on action to improve efficiency and productivity, and to reduce variation between NHS organisations. These fall into the categories of:

- Productivity
- Population Health and Prevention
- Mental Health
- Timely Access to Care
- Community by Design
- Maximising Value for Money
- Improving Value, Optimising Outcomes, & Minimising Variation
- Workforce Productivity

The national programmes will continue to support the delivery of services that make the most of the resources available. In the present financial environment, the framework has been developed carefully to ensure that the requirements do not drive costs but reinforce best practice through quality, efficiency, and patient experience.

In issuing this planning framework the Cabinet Secretary is giving a strong sense of direction for organisations to work cohesively. This is essential with unprecedented challenges and demand pressures. Whilst dealing with these pressures, this planning framework identifies the underlining essential approach to deliver greater efficiency, reduce waste, harm and variation and improve health inequalities.

As part of the Value & Sustainability agenda, financial allocation letters for NHS Wales for 2026/2027 have been issued to NHS organisations, for the first time as part of the Planning Framework, on 19 December 2026 and is consistent with and support the priorities and actions required. This emphasises the importance of organisations taking the actions required to support financial improvement and delivering to the agreed parameters set by the Cabinet Secretary. It is essential that organisations continue to deliver actions to mitigate expenditure growth, deliver savings and efficiency, alongside an increase in productivity. This context has informed the approach to the allocations set for NHS bodies. There is recognition from the Cabinet Secretary of difficult choices, de-prioritisation, and flexibility being required to deliver what is required.

Five Ways of Working – Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

In developing the NHS Wales Planning Framework 2026-2029 the Health and Social Care and Early Years Group, Welsh Government has had regard to the [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and in particular the five ways of working set out below:

❖ Long term

The IMTPs are three-year plans but should draw on an organisation's 10-year strategy and clinical services strategy, ensuring the longer-term is clearly in mind. The three-year

IMTPs will seek to set out what actions will be taken forward in the immediate three-year period that will support the longer-term directions and goals.

This planning framework covers a three-year period 2026-2029. In developing it the longer term has been considered. Key topics and requirements for inclusion in the IMTPs are ones that will continue to impact for many years to come, such as Duties of Quality and Candour, innovative and digital solutions, financial investment and strengthened population health and prevention, partnership, governance and planning arrangements.

The Duties of Quality and Candour became statutory requirements for NHS bodies in April 2023 and the positive long-term impacts of these duties will be the further enhancement of an open and honest culture, which is widely associated with good quality care. This is linked to improving patient safety, encouraging learning and may act as an incentive for reducing incidents. Whilst Quality has always been at the forefront of everything we do, the Cabinet Secretary has made Quality and Safety one of his six key priorities in its own right.

Long term trends that are highlighted in the directions from this planning framework include:

- **Reducing Waste** – The [Bevan Commission's](#) report '[What a waste!](#)' which called for a focus on inappropriate waste in the delivery of health and social care in Wales and urgent action to address it. Reducing waste will play a crucial role in tackling the enormous challenges ahead and in developing more prudent and economically, socially, and sustainable services and support.
- **Improving population health** is important in terms of long-term trends as well. The aim of the NHS when it was set up in 1948 was to do that and therefore support the economy, meaning the workforce would be fitter and healthier. Over the last 75 years, times have changed. New techniques, new diagnostics and new treatments have meant that people are able to be diagnosed more thoroughly, at times at an earlier stage in their clinical pathway, with more screening programme available. Organisations are looking at how to manage not just the screening programmes but what happens after the diagnosis and to make sure treatment is available as swiftly as possible if needed.
- **Impacts on physical and mental health** are important. While over half of people in Wales have made looking after their health a high priority, many are experiencing a decline in their physical and mental well-being, according to the latest [Time to Talk Public Health survey](#) from Public Health Wales. [PHW Time to Talk Survey - March 2025](#)

When asked what effect 17 different factors have on their health, respondents indicated that the three main positive effects were:

- Access to nature and outdoor spaces (74 per cent)
- Their levels of physical activity (63 per cent)
- Their home environment (58 per cent)

In contrast, the three main negative effects on their health were reported to be:

- Their access to healthcare services (42 per cent)
- Their financial situation (34 per cent)
- Social media (34 per cent)

The results highlight the urgent need for action to create environments that support better health and well-being and how to best support people experiencing health problems, to have timely access to services. It is therefore vital that NHS organisations plan within the context of the wider determinants of health.

In addition, Public Health Wales have published, the first in a series of heat health impact reports for Wales. These demonstrate the impact that extreme heat has on both the health of people and of the need to adapt our facilities and services to mitigate these risks. NHS organisations are expected to take action aimed at addressing these issues as part of the decarbonisation and adaptation plans they are developing. [Heat Mortality Annual Report 2024](#)

- The **socio-economic duty** came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021. Its aim is to improve decision making and helps those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. It puts tackling inequality at the heart of decision making and will build on the good work public bodies are already doing. It is key to underpinning the focus and direction for NHS Wales when they develop their plans.
- **Technology** supported the way in which we were able to work remotely throughout the pandemic. It meant that many people without front facing jobs were able to work from home and new ways of working were able to be developed to support staff and patients. More virtual appointments between patients and clinicians were supported both in primary care with GPs and in secondary care consultants. The development of Consultant Connect software rollout also meant that clinicians were able to seek and obtain advice from each other to speed up diagnosis and treatment options. The further advancement of digital transformation and innovation is another key feature of NHS planning.
- **Chief Scientific Officer; report – 10 years +**

The report published in August 2023 acknowledges that Wales has an aging population. By 2038 almost one in five people in Wales is projected to be 70 years or over. Old age dependency ratio will have changed from 1 to 5 to a projected almost 1 to 3 between 2000 and 2038. Life expectancy in the UK has grown at a slower rate than other similar countries in the last 70 years.

The report says consideration should be given to mitigating the drivers of poor health to optimise life expectancy, particularly among the most deprived groups, to support reductions in health inequalities.

[Science Evidence Advice \(SEA\)](#)

[NHS in 10+ years: An examination of the projected impact of Long-Term Conditions and Risk Factors in Wales: 10 Oct 2023: Senedd debates](#)

❖ Prevention

Across health and social care there are the traditional aspects of prevention in terms of healthy lifestyles, such as reducing smoking, working towards and maintaining healthy weight but also the broader aspects of prevention.

A broader prevention approach could be early advice or screening for patients, early diagnosis to prevent further deterioration, prevention of a patient to come to harm while waiting for the next stage of their clinical pathway, preventing deconditioning while waiting to be transferred home or to a new setting, preventing a patient suffering pain and distress at the end of their life etc.

This planning framework further emphasises the importance of population health and prevention, being identified as one of the key strategic priorities. This supports the broader prevention agenda and recognises it is important in breaking the negative cycles. Preventing illness and preventing deterioration of illness when waiting for treatment is addressed in the new 3 P's policy [Promote, prevent and prepare for planned care](#) published in August 2023 to:

- Promote healthy behaviours
- Prevent deconditioning whilst waiting
- Prepare for treatment and recovery

The National Clinical Framework and a series of Quality Statements that have been produced by Welsh Government also support the prevention agenda and recognise the need to reduce demand in the future.

Quality Statements

The Duties of Quality and Candour mean a consistent approach to quality and safety to ensure learning and improvement to prevent recurrence of incidents. This planning framework recognises the need for organisations to work within the requirements of these duties and to adopt the six domains of quality and the six enablers as foundations on which to plan their services.

Quality treatment and services will help prevent deterioration in someone's condition and ensure they have the best care first time, making the most of resources available and using them to the best effect.

Quality Domains	Quality Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe• Timely• Effective• Efficient• Equitable• Person centred	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership• Workforce• Culture• Information• Learning, improvement and research• Whole system approach

An impact assessment toolkit is available to the NHS to help them in their decision making to ensure that quality and safety support that process.

It is also essential to maximise resource utilisation across the system and service delivery will be supported with this through the Welsh Government Value and Sustainability Board, Chaired by the NHS Wales Chief Executive.

This planning framework recognises that there is not one easy solution, plans and decisions will need to be balance considering the policies and their impacts on different problems and solutions.

Integration

This planning framework seeks to bring together the key policies within health that will impact on the NHS in Wales. There is a need to build an integrated seamless service that is recognised by A Healthier Wales which was refreshed in December 2024.

[Written Statement: A Healthier Wales Actions Refresh \(4 December 2024\)](#)

Integration can be in several forms, and these have influenced the development of this planning framework. It can be in relation to health and social care, primary and secondary care and through a wider range of topics that impact on people's health.

- ◆ The health of the population of Wales is not just influenced by health interventions but equally by the **wider determinants of health** e.g. housing, transport, environment, education etc. Health organisations will need to work with their partners and stakeholders to ensure that decisions that are taken across these areas also generate multiple benefits; for example, that transport links ensure people are not isolated and can reach work, learning and leisure opportunities, that housing is of good quality and that environments enhance people's wellbeing. In developing this planning framework, policy colleagues across the Welsh Government portfolios were asked for views and contributions.
- ◆ Acknowledgment of '**anchor institutions**' has come to the fore. The Health Foundation's 'Anchors in a Storm' article demonstrates the importance of anchor institutions in supporting and nurturing the communities within which they sit. The top two lessons include purposely tackling inequalities in health and co-producing with communities, both of which lay at the heart of our principles and should be reflected in the IMTP cycle. [The Health Foundation - Anchors in a Storm](#)
- ◆ The **impact of employment** on the health of individuals is crucial. The impact of COVID-19 related employment changes, insights for interventions to influence health and health equity are key areas, when tackled can reduce inequalities in health. [Good, fair work - Public Health Wales](#)

Collaboration

Collaboration underpins both the development of this planning framework and the directions to NHS organisations.

- ◆ This planning framework has been discussed at regular intervals with key stakeholders such as Welsh Government policy colleagues, Chief Executives of NHS Wales, Directors of Finance, and Directors of Planning and through networks with social care colleagues and those across wider government departments where topics converge such as economy, environment, education etc.
- ◆ The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Minister for Mental Health & Wellbeing and Minister for Children and Social Care agree with the development of this planning framework and the directions and priorities that it sets.

This planning framework ensures that NHS organisations are fully aware of the importance of collaboration and increases the prominence of these in the minds of those developing the plans which ultimately will be the guidance for delivering services.

- ◆ The health organisations produce their IMTPs. They work collaboratively with other organisations, particularly within the public, third and independent sectors, to ensure their health plans are aligned to the Regional Partnership Board Area Plans and the Public Service Board Wellbeing Plans.
- The **Accelerated Cluster Development** ensures collaboration and connection with the wider health and social care partnerships. With a direction of travel to enable diagnosis and treatment in the community to ensure patients can be cared for closer to home. [Strategic Programme - Primary Care One](#) [Accelerated Cluster Development Overview - Primary Care One](#)
- The key topics and requirements call for joint work and discussions with partner organisations, stakeholders, as well as the public, to ensure that decisions are relevant and make a positive difference to people's lives.
- In 2025, the Ministerial Advisory Group NHS Performance and Productivity was appointed by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to provide the Cabinet Secretary with assurance on the effectiveness of current arrangements to improve performance and productivity in NHS Wales and observations on how to strengthen current arrangements further. This included for example, a stronger focus on regional planning and delivery. The Planning Framework recognises this work. [Written Statement: Report by the External Ministerial Advisory Group on NHS Wales Performance and Productivity \(29 April 2025\) | GOV.WALES](#)

Involvement

NHS Wales organisations, local authorities, third and independent sector are aware of the IMTP planning cycle process. The expectation is that organisations will be able to involve colleagues further in the development of their plans.

It is important that organisations understand 'what matters' to the people affected by the topics highlighted in this planning framework and how might they be involved in delivering services which mitigate the effects.

Compassionate Leadership is key to the requirement to focus on “how” services are delivered. It recognises that leadership is a most crucial aspect to ensure delivery of expectations and ambitions. NHS P&I will lead on this work and the ethos of Compassionate Leadership has influenced the development of this planning framework. [Leadership - HEIW](#).

Impact

This planning framework fulfils the duty for Welsh Ministers to issue ‘Directions’ to the NHS in Wales under the NHS Wales Act 2006, amended by the NHS Finance (Wales) Act 2014. This planning framework provides the context within which health boards and other NHS organisations are expecting to address the challenges they face during 2026-2029

This planning framework, and the IMTPs (plans) that emanate from it, are statutory requirements. This planning framework will provide reassurance and direction around what is needed next to keep services joined up and support patients and staff over the next three years. These directions from the Cabinet Secretary highlight the need for activities to address inequalities and to ensure women and other sections of the communities in Wales are not disadvantaged in gaining access to care and treatment. NHS organisations need to continue progressing their anti-racism plans, their Welsh language uptake and their decarbonisation and adaption planning to ensure that the NHS in Wales is working towards a net zero environment by 2030, in line with the Welsh Government commitment for all public services.

This planning framework has been issued by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care and will provide clear messages to the NHS in Wales and its stakeholders key strategic and operational factors. It will act as the foundation for the IMTPs that will be produced, to address these priorities.

For Chief Executives and other professionals across NHS Wales, the planning framework is a significant document. Issued annually each autumn it guides the development of the organisations’ IMTPs. It provides a mechanism for the Cabinet Secretary to convey the government’s requirements and priorities for the period ahead.

Costs and Savings

No financial cost has been incurred in scoping and developing this planning framework by the Health, Social Care and Early Years Group within the Welsh Government.

The planning framework requires NHS organisations to develop financially balanced, 3-year plans. For the first time this year, detail of the NHS financial allocation was included within the planning framework.

This planning framework includes elements to ensure the NHS identifies cost savings. This includes being underpinned by **Value based Healthcare (VbH)** and prudent principles and pathways, that fully align to the National Clinical Framework. (NCF). The Value and Sustainability Board are also working closely to advise the NHS in Wales on how to ensure prudent decisions are made. In addition, the framework went further this

year setting out a number of enabling actions, which we are mandating on the basis of “adopt or justify”. Each has an evidence base to demonstrate improved efficiency and/or outcomes, without driving additional cost.

The NHS in Wales is facing unprecedented challenges in terms of its financial position. This framework has been developed observing the pressures in the system as a whole.

These important approaches provide opportunities to demonstrate that organisations are delivering the required standards and values across the health and care system, many of which are no cost /cost saving in financial terms. [Value in Health](#)

Mechanism

Legislation is not proposed in the development of this planning framework and as such a regulatory impact assessment is not required.

This planning framework was issued by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care in December 2025 to provide directions to NHS Wales on the way in which it must plan for the next three years.

This planning framework reinforces the statutory responsibility that NHS health boards and NHS trusts must produce three-year balanced plans. Through defining priorities these directions indicate the transformative approach to provide sustainable health care services with good outcomes for the people of Wales, within the unprecedented financial and workforce constraints following the COVID19 pandemic and exiting the European Union.

SECTION 8. CONCLUSION

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

The planning framework is the mechanism by which the “Directions” from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care are issued to the NHS in Wales. It is a statutory requirement for NHS Local Health Boards and Trusts to respond to those directions and submit their plans. Special Health Authorities and other national organisations follow the remit of the planning framework by way of good practice.

Through this planning framework 2026-2029, NHS organisations are “Directed” to produce three-year plans which are named Integrated Medium-Term Plans or IMTP’s. The document brings together Welsh Government commitments and policies, providing the context and environment landscape on which the NHS Plans should be developed. These plans must set out how NHS organisations will improve the health outcomes of the populations they serve, within the resources available to them.

Individual Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) have been undertaken for the policies, programmes, legislation and mechanisms that this planning framework brings together. These IIAs assess how the people of Wales will be affected by the different NHS activities delivering health services.

The planning framework indirectly impacts on everyone living and working in Wales (over 3 million people) providing the focus for the health service to reduce inequalities and improve health outcomes within the current challenging parameters of reduced workforce and available finance. The plans developed by the NHS organisations will set out how people within the organisation’s responsibility will be cared for and how services will be managed.

In developing the Planning Framework, the Cabinet Secretary will have considered and been mindful of the many individuals and groups that will have met the Cabinet Secretary and written to them over the course of the year, all of which will influence the Cabinet Secretary in making his decision on what to include as priorities for the service in making their plans.

Organisations themselves will often have patient representatives and groups who provide feedback on care and treatment they have received and provide useful insight and proposals for improvements. These can be fed through into the plans that organisations prepare by way of a response.

Many of the people working in NHS organisations, developing plans and delivering services, from Chief Executives to operational staff in hospitals to workers in the community pharmacies, GP practices etc, have opportunities to contribute to the plans that are developed through the bottom-up planning processes that organisations operate. Accelerated Cluster Development is one way in which primary care colleagues are taking an active role in planning and organising services that are readily available to their client population. [Accelerated Cluster Development Toolkit - Primary Care One](#)

This planning framework supports a consistent approach and identifies priority areas that are addressed across the NHS. The Cabinet Secretary has set out their six strategic priorities and these are:

- Timely Access to Care
- Population Health and Prevention
- Community by Design
- Mental Health Access
- Women's Health
- Quality and Safety

The expectation is on NHS organisations to collaborate and involve their own stakeholders, including the people in Wales receiving healthcare, in the development of and response to this planning framework. This includes children and their representatives; people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010; Welsh speakers and Welsh language specialist groups; as well as other people who may be affected by the proposal.

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

This planning framework for 2026-2029 should have a positive impact on people across Wales by improving access to services, improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities. This planning framework is underpinned by the long-term future vision of “A Healthier Wales” (AHW), the strategic plan for health and social care in Wales to focus on health and wellbeing, and on preventing illness, including the published refreshed actions in 2024. The planning framework helps to support the delivery of AHW in requiring three-year IMTPs from organisations to achieve the goals.

[A healthier Wales: long term plan for health and social care | GOV.WALES](#)
[A Healthier Wales - Action refresh 2024-25](#)

This planning framework brings a positive impact to healthcare by identifying priorities for NHS organisations whilst stressing the requirement to optimise resources. If the Welsh Government did not provide guidance and priorities this could lead to an inconsistent approach which would widen health inequalities. Women, children and other sections of the community in Wales are highlighted to ensure quality and levels of service are given attention with positive impacts. Furthermore, it is essential to have guidance in the current financially constrained environment where all delivery is being carefully considered and reviewed.

Significant positive impacts for people of Wales come through improvements in ways of working for NHS bodies and the focus on priority areas which have been identified for having positive benefits, particularly on protected groups, examples include:

- the adverse impact of long waiting times and this framework has been influenced by initiatives such as the 3P's policy [Promote, prevent and prepare for planned care](#) which seeks to Promote healthy behaviours, Prevent deconditioning whilst patients

are waiting and to Prepare patients for treatment and recovery and the Ministerial Priority for improvements to Planned Care. Before the end of March 2026 the aim is to reduce the numbers on waiting lists by some 200,000 people. This will impact positively on those that have been waiting for diagnosis or treatment ensuring that people's health can be prioritised.

- The aim to improve access and delivery of primary and community care as close to home as possible for people, will impact positively on all who use the health service but, especially vulnerable groups. A drive towards community level diagnostics will be part of this. Community by Design is one of the six strategic priorities in the planning framework, it is not a standalone published policy but rather a guiding principle embedded in Welsh Government's approach to planning care closer to the community. Having care closer to home also means quicker access to better diagnostics, leading to better health outcomes. Furthermore, children will be supported positively through the GMS contracts where there will be a requirement for health screening for children.
- Having mental health as a ministerial priority will have a positive impact for both adults and children. It has been recognised that children, in particular, suffered from the impact of lock down and the restrictions brought by Covid-19. A report [Young people's mental health deteriorated at greater rate during the pandemic](#) . The research was led by [Professor Willem Kuyken](#) at Oxford University's [Department of Psychiatry](#). Young people who went through the pandemic were more likely to experience increased depression, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and worsening general mental well-being.
 - While mental health declined in both groups over time, those in the pandemic experienced a worsening in their mental health:
 - Cases of depression increased 8.5% in those going through the pandemic versus 0.3% in the pre-pandemic group.
 - Cases of high/very high social, emotional and behavioural difficulties increased 7.9% in the pandemic cohort vs 3.5% in the pre-pandemic cohort.
 - Cases of possible/probable mental health difficulties increased 12.8% in the pandemic group versus 4.5% in the pre-pandemic group
- value based health care, which is seeking to reduce waste, harm and variation in care. Its principles of equity and reducing unwarranted variation bring a positive impact overall through reducing health inequalities.
- addressing health inequalities by local health boards. The Duty of Quality supports the improvement of quality and safety for patients being treated and the Duty of Candour requires an open approach by all local NHS Health Boards and NHS Trusts.
- The Bevan Commission's report – What a Waste – to focus on the problem of inappropriate waste in the delivery of health and social care in Wales and urgent

action to address it. [Home - Bevan Commission](#) [What a Waste Final Report - Bevan Commission](#)

- Digital transformation by reducing travel and will also have a positive impact for rural communities to access specialist services virtually.
- The new innovation strategy - Wales Innovates: Creating a stronger fairer greener Wales intends to deliver a more cohesive environment for health and innovation. Creating a positive impact through the mission to be a coherent innovation ecosystem where the health and social care sector collaborates with industry, academia and the third sector to deliver greater value and impact for citizens, the economy, and the environment. [Wales innovates: Creating a stronger, fairer, greener Wales](#)

This planning framework will have a positive impact on people working in NHS Wales, there were over nearly 100,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) people directly employed by NHS Wales as at 31 March 2025. Giving guidance to NHS organisations to enable them to plan in the medium term gives security and guidance to the whole of the NHS Wales.

In Autumn 2023, the Welsh Government's Chief Scientific Adviser for Health published a report "[NHS in 10+ years: An examination of the projected impact of Long-Term Conditions and Risk Factors in Wales](#)" describing the challenges the NHS in Wales is likely to face over the next 10 to 25 years. The report made it clear that the current demographic, economic and societal challenges facing our health and care system in Wales will continue to place unsustainable demands on our services.

In response to the evidence set out in this report, the former Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care announced a refresh of the actions within A Healthier Wales, our long term plan for health and care.

The refreshed actions can be found here:

[Written Statement: A Healthier Wales Actions Refresh 4 December 2024](#)

The directions in this planning framework take account of the identified health inequalities and direction of travel for the next 10 years.

All NHS organisations have their part to play in making sure that the by adopting best practices and support for their own staff they are helping to deliver better health and care services for their populations, organisations must continue to develop their Anti-Racism plans, support for the Welsh Language, as well as adopting key criteria to embrace climate change requirements and what is required to support economic development.

Adopting the standards in health and social care helps to drive and support our Welsh economy. [Stronger, fairer, greener Wales: a plan for employability and skills](#)

Health and social care services need to plan to meet the needs of their respective populations and must do so regardless of age, race, religion, sex, and sexual identity, etc. Organisations need to ensure that people have equal access to information and support.

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

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

This planning framework is underpinned by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, providing the overarching building blocks that are needed, through the five ways of working (long term, prevention, integration, involvement, and collaboration). It is also underpinned by 'A Healthier Wales'.

This planning framework supports the NHS organisations to contribute positively to the well-being goals and objectives. It indicates that they are important to Ministers and required by the NHS, giving a consistent message to all NHS organisations at the most senior level.

Having this planning framework should bring about positive contribution to all the goals:

- a prosperous Wales
- a resilient Wales
- a healthier Wales
- a more equal Wales
- a Wales of cohesive communities
- a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- a globally responsible Wales

This planning framework is a key tool in the direction of a healthier and more equal Wales and directs the planning of NHS services which in turn should bring about a positive contribution to these goals. NHS services should impact positively indirectly on the remaining goals, for example a healthy population leads to a prosperous, resilient Wales and the influence of increasing focus on local primary care brings about cohesive communities.

There are positive impacts for Welsh speakers through consistency of approach and the influence of Health and Social Services Welsh Language Strategy *More than just words*. [**Follow on strategic framework for Welsh language services in health social services and social care 2016-2019**](#)

The Welsh language is important in the delivery of health and social care. For many people, being able to access information or describe their symptoms and talk with professionals in their preferred language is key to getting the right treatment and care. Health boards and trusts are subject to Welsh Language Standards (regulated by the Welsh Language Commissioner), which are a set of legally binding requirements that aim to improve bilingual services.

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

This planning framework provides the "Direction" for the NHS organisation three-year Integrated Medium-Term Plans (IMTP's). Monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by way

of reporting by the NHS organisations to Welsh Government. There are a number of mechanisms:

- NHS organisations will submit their plans for assessment for the 2026-2029 delivery period. Planning, policy, programme, delivery, workforce and finance colleagues will feedback on the plans and through this alignment with and value of this planning framework is assessed. The assessment process provides advice to the relevant Cabinet Secretary who makes the ultimate decision on whether the plan submitted is approved.
- NHS Directors report to a wide group of Welsh Government officials including delivery, policy and planning colleagues with qualitative and quantitative data which gives an opportunity to assess if this planning framework has supported the organisations to stay on track with their plans.
- The Planning Framework supports a number of key metrics and a number of enabling actions. These are monitored during the year and progress against these will demonstrate the success of the organisation's plan.
- Six monthly progress meetings between senior leaders of Welsh Government and NHS bodies.
- Six monthly meetings between the Cabinet Secretary and the Chair of NHS Local Health Boards and Trusts.