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Annual Report 2023/24

Section 1: Performance Report

Section 2: Accountability Report

Section 3: Accounts and Financial Statements



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Section 1:

Performance Report

Performance Report

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1. Introduction

The legacy of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and ongoing rise in the cost of living continues to have profound effects for the people of Wales. This includes not only the direct health impacts, but also the broader and longer-term implications for our health and well-being.

Climate change is recognised as possibly the most significant global threat that we face. Its consequences will impact all areas of life that are essential to achieve and maintain good health. This highlights the profound interdependence between population, societal, economic, and environmental well-being. Although the threat from COVID-19 appears to have reduced over the past year, we have remained vigilant on threats to the people in Wales from communicable diseases and non-infectious hazards.

We have continued to learn from our response to the COVID-19 pandemic to build robust plans for response to future outbreaks. We also know the impact these challenges, particularly the pandemic, have had on the wider health and social care system. The pressure on the NHS and social care remains significant, but this is also true for all public services. We also know that the projected rise in risk factors related to health conditions, coupled with an ageing population will increase the number of people living with long term health conditions.

Most of the diseases that are increasing significantly have common key preventable drivers, including: smoking, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and high risk drinking. Low levels of mental wellbeing impact directly on individuals' capacity for self-care and can lead to the adoption of health harming behaviours as a coping strategy. Now more than ever, we require the collective efforts of a range of partners to address these issues over the coming years.

We have an opportunity through making a system-wide strategic shift to prevention to address these challenges and harness the opportunities to us in Wales. This is intended to deliver benefits across the short, medium and long term including: reducing the financial burden of preventable disease on health and social care and employment, halting the rise in preventable disease and tackling the wider determinants of health to deliver measurable improvements in our population's health.

We have seen the power and impact that we can have when we mobilise our collective efforts and expertise, including the improvements that can be realised at scale through embracing innovation, technological developments and our commitment to collaboration. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) continues to provide the enabling legislative driver to enable us to take a long term preventative approach, focused on involving the public and collaborating with our partners to deliver integrated solutions as we tackle the challenges that we face today and tomorrow. We also recognise that we continue to operate within a

volatile and changing environment, and will therefore continue to demonstrate an ability to dynamically respond to new and emerging threats and opportunities.

In developing our strategy, we focused on where we, as Public Health Wales, can add most value for the people of Wales. We have done this through the delivery of our six strategic priorities, which are underpinned by our commitment to reducing health inequalities. We have continued to demonstrate an unwavering focus on reducing health inequalities and ensuring that we deliver maximum value and impact for our population.

2. Our Strategic Plan

Following our Board's approval in March 2023, we published our new Long Term Strategy - *Working Together for a Healthier Wales, 2023-2035* in May 2023, which sets out the actions we will take to achieve a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives, and where all people have fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being.

The strategy sets out our six strategic priorities, and maps out in detail how we plan to address each priority, which are:

- ❖ Influencing the wider determinants of health
- ❖ Promoting mental and social well-being
- ❖ Promoting healthy behaviours
- ❖ Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention
- ❖ Delivering excellent public health services to protect the public and maximise population health outcomes
- ❖ Tackling the public health effects of climate change

Our Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 (also known as the Integrated Medium Term Plan) was submitted to the Welsh Government at the end of March 2023. This was the first three years implementation plan for our new Long Term Strategy. On the 12 September 2023, we received approval of the Plan by the Minister for Health and Social Services.

2.1 Progress against delivering our plan

The end of March 2024 saw the conclusion of our Strategic Plan 2023/24 and we ended the year with over 97% of our delivery milestones completed, equating to 291 milestones delivered from a total of 297 milestones. This compares to 93% of milestones completed in 2022/23.

Around 2% of milestones were reported as incomplete in 2023/24. Delays in delivery were often due to factors outside of our control including dependencies on activities by other organisations. During the last 12 months, 63 milestone requests for change to delivery dates were approved, with an average extension of 4 months. Any agreed milestones that were unable to be delivered will roll-over into our 2024/25 plan of which 40% will be delivered in Quarter 1, 33% in Quarter 2, 11% in Quarter 3, and 16% in Quarter 4. We have also made good progress across a number of our strategic change programmes.

Our progress in delivering our milestones represents the successful delivery on completing the first year of our Long-Term Strategy, which is a significant

achievement for the organisation and represents all the great work and dedication of our staff during very challenging times for public services.

Progress against the plan is reported to our Executive Team and Board on a monthly basis through our Performance and Assurance Dashboard and Insights Report. This includes the ratings for each milestone, an exception report for those where issues have been identified, a control process for managing changes in relation to milestone delivery with a projected year-end milestone status reporting the rate of completion. Ongoing assurance is also provided to the Welsh Government through our Integrated Quality, Planning and Delivery and Joint Executive Team accountability review meetings.

Further information on our priorities areas including examples of what we delivered in 2023/24, alongside key challenges and opportunities for learning, are set out in the following section.

Our Priorities 2023-2035



We are Public Health Wales.
We exist to help all people in
Wales live longer, healthier lives.

Our values are **working together**
with **trust and respect** to **make a difference**.



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3. Strategic Priority 1: Influencing the wider determinants of health

Everyone in Wales deserves the opportunity for good health. However, too often people become ill or die too early because they do not have the building blocks for good health. These include education and skills, a warm safe home, fair work, money and resources, access to affordable and sustainable transport, and a healthy physical environment. These social, economic and environmental factors affect us from our earliest experiences and throughout our lifetime.

Influencing these factors is a major challenge, and over the last year we have focussed our efforts on the cost of living, safe, healthy and fair work, advocacy and influencing and building the capability of our public health workforce.

3.1 Responding to the cost of living

During the last year, we have had a major focus developing our work responding to cost-of-living as a public health crisis. In addition to supporting our staff and services users, we have reviewed impacts on children, making recommendations across ten priority policy action areas. We published findings from the all-Wales summit delivered through the [Building a Healthier Wales partnership](#). Using this, and other evidence, we contributed to the Expert Reference Group convened by the Welsh Government on responding to the cost of living crisis and have worked to influence Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy as it developed, with a focus on babies and health inequalities. We continue to gain population insights on cost of living through our Time to Talk survey, and are building on this work to date to focus on child poverty through our Building a Healthier Wales strategic partnership.

3.2 Informing and advocating action on health inequality

We informed and advocated action on reducing health inequalities, including launching a [Welsh Health Equity Solutions Platform](#), an innovative first of its kind live portal including evidence, data, policies, practical tools and resources to inform and support policy making, investment prioritisation, cross-sector action, and solutions. We published a guide to using the socio-economic duty in Wales, and a series spotlight features on key topics, such as gender equity, cost of living crisis, measuring value, and best start in life.

We identified good practice through International Horizon Scanning on the essential conditions for health equity, universal free primary school meals, and the impact of poverty on babies, children and young people. This work was delivered as part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe and the Welsh Government helping to accelerate progress towards healthy, prosperous lives for current and future generations in Wales and globally. We helped renew the MOU until 2026 confirming joint

commitment and resources to tackle health inequities and ensure no one is left behind.

3.3 Influencing health and equity through safe, healthy and fair work

We have developed our work with partners on employment as determinants of health. Using our guide and resources on participation in [fair work as a route to health, well-being and equity](#), we have engaged with stakeholders locally, regionally and nationally to influence action and increase participation in fair work. Insights were gathered during the engagement phase to further understand stakeholder priorities, challenges and their current needs to support the future direction of our work.

One of this work's successes is seeing an increase in the number of well-being plans produced by Public Services Boards explicitly referencing employment and/or fair work characteristics, with some quoting the fair work guide. Our work has also been included in the Welsh Government's guidance on fair work.

Our Healthy Working Wales team is building a digital delivery model to significantly expand reach to a wider range and bigger number of employers. Research was undertaken to inform the creation of a new employer-facing website. The website content has been revamped and expanded across many topics to support employer action on health and wellbeing, including musculoskeletal health, mental health and wellbeing, fair work and neurodiversity. Digital campaigns and awareness raising activities have included an active presence on social media platforms and promotion through stakeholders' channels.

Research with employers was undertaken to tailor developments, using an online survey and in-depth interviews to provide qualitative insights. A new training and capacity building offer is being created, working jointly with Business Wales to host products and reach thousands more employers. A sickness absence management toolkit and training e-module was developed, and webinars on equality, diversity and inclusion with a focus on disability, and musculoskeletal health were launched.

3.4 Health in all policies through health impact assessment

We continue to support a health in all policies approach, advising on the development and consultation of Welsh Government regulations for Health Impact Assessment (HIA) under the Public Health (Wales) Act, 2017. Additionally, we have supported a number of Public Health Institutes across the world to advance HIA as a tool for health in all policies. This includes Ireland, Portugal and in Australia and conducted and published a number of unique and influential HIAs including on climate change in Wales, the health and equity impact of the Comprehensive and Progressive TransPacific Partnership (CPTPP) free trade agreement.

The trade HIA led to a series of webinars and events delivered in partnership with WHIASU and Public Health Network Cymru and the Trade in a Wellbeing Economy' event was attended by twenty three academic, civil society and public health professionals including members of the UK Business and Trade department and Welsh Government Trade policy. The evaluation and feedback was hugely positive and the discussions led to further engagement with UK trade policy makers directly and providing public health focused input into governmental consultations.

3.5 Increasing wider determinants of health capability

We have worked to strengthen the capability in public health to influence wider determinants of health. We developed our expanding [Public Health Network Cymru](#) for the wider public health workforce, hosting conferences on spatial planning and the climate crisis. We established a community of interest for wider determinants, supporting public health professionals locally and nationally.

In addition, we have increased the understanding for specific determinants, including [education and health](#). We published evidence on the relationship between educational attainment and health, and a map of the factors affecting educational achievement in Wales. The map shows multiple interconnected factors, many beyond the school setting which affect educational outcomes. We have used the map with partners to see to increase the impact of efforts to reduce the educational attainment gap in Wales. We have also contributed to the continued understanding of housing and health through reports on [affordability of homes](#).

Shaping Places for Well-being in Wales Programme

In partnership with Executive Directors of Public Health across Wales and their teams, the Wider Determinants of Health Unit has been successful in securing a three-year funding award from the Health Foundation Shaping Places programme.

The *Shaping Places for Well-being in Wales Programme* seeks to support Public Services Boards (PSBs) to influence the wider determinants of health through theory and evidence informed system approaches to reduce health inequalities, to add to the evidence base on implementation of systems approaches and to share learning.

Following a Health Foundation funded design phase, we co-produced the programme with representatives from PSBs, Welsh Government, Future Generations Commissioner's Office and Local Health Board Public Health Teams. The programme will establish three learning groups open to all PSBs in Wales, involving members and technical officers. Each learning group will take one of three agreed themes (climate and nature emergency, poverty and inequalities and neighbourhood well-being) and be guided through a flexible five-step approach, using techniques to describe and explore systems to inform and test action, applying and integrating learning with local delivery of PSB plans.

In addition to sharing learning across Wales and other UK nations, the intention is to develop a legacy plan at the end of the life of the programme. This project is part of the Health Foundation's Shaping Places programme. The Health Foundation is an independent charitable organisation working to build a healthier UK.

4. Strategic Priority 2: Promoting mental and social well-being

Mental and social well-being are the foundations of lifelong health and well-being. The wider determinants provide the conditions for good health, and social and mental well-being can be seen as the foundations for healthy people and communities.

Our work in this priority focuses in three broad areas:

- ❖ Creating opportunities and motivation for everyone to prioritise time for the things that keep them mentally well
- ❖ The importance of the first 1000 days of life in setting the foundations for lifelong social and emotional development
- ❖ Action to create a trauma informed Wales to prevent the harm arising from adversity in childhood and throughout life including the prevention of violence.

During the last year we have continued our work to develop and implement the National Trauma Practice Framework by developing an implementation plan and a children and young people's version.

We have produced an implementation plan for the youth violence prevention strategy and provided support for the implementation of the Serious Violence Duty. We have increased our ability to monitor the impact of violence through the implementation of a full scale violence prevention surveillance system for Wales.

We have continued our development of the mental wellbeing programme of work by engaging extensively with the public and professionals on their understanding of mental wellbeing and testing out our approach to ensure that it is accessible to all. This will inform the ongoing implementation of the Hapus programme of work. Hapus is a long-term strategic programme of work, facilitated by Public Health Wales, aimed at protecting and promoting mental wellbeing across the population of Wales. We are working with national and local organisations to launch a national conversation on mental wellbeing. The conversation will take place through digital and real world settings through which we will share evidence-based information on ways to protect and promote mental wellbeing and encourage people to share what matters for their mental wellbeing. We have formalised our partnership working for the Hapus programme by agreeing a formal partnership agreement with our partner organisations who will work with us to achieve our shared goals.

Working with the Centre for Health, Activity and Wellbeing at Cardiff Metropolitan University, we have undertaken research to understand the barriers and enablers to individuals taking action to promote and protect their mental wellbeing and this work will be published in the coming year. The research will help us to better understand which groups of the population are less likely to be aware of or take

action to promote their mental wellbeing and to better understand the factors that enable and prevent people taking action.

We have continued our work to support the embedding of a Whole School Approach to Mental and Emotional Wellbeing reporting on learning from the implementation process and continuing our work to share evidence on what works in a way that is accessible to our education partners. Achievement of the ambition set with Welsh Government to have 90% of schools with secondary aged learners working to embed a Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing through undertaking self-evaluations of their strengths and areas for development, 92% of schools had commenced or completed self-evaluations as of 31st March 2024. Together with schools, we were close to achieving the more challenging ambition of 80% of schools with secondary-aged learner with action plans in place, reaching 74% by 31 March 2024.

We have also continued to undertake work to look at the evidence for what works and disseminate this learning to those in the Education sector to help them in decision making. Finally we have continued our work on the importance of the First 1000 Days of a child's life in setting the foundations for lifelong health and wellbeing reviewing the programme of work and setting out plans for the next phase of development.

4.1 Every Child Parent Health Information Offer

Every Child [‘Your Pregnancy and Birth’](#) and [‘Every Child Newborn to age 2’](#) have been published. These new resources are part of a programme of work to produce the successor to Bump, Baby and Beyond and are the primary health information resource provided by the NHS to first time parents in Wales.

The new resources were developed following feedback from parents indicating they wanted information that better reflected their parenting journey, which was more supportive in tone and was provided at the time when it was most relevant to them. The new booklets have been written with guidance from health professionals and input from parents who have already been on the parenting journey. Pre-publication testing and early feedback post-publication has been extremely positive.



"The words aren't complicated, they're not using hospital terms that I wouldn't have a clue of. I read it all and I understood every word... The book doesn't go into the science of everything, it just gives a description of what it is, what it will do, and that's all you need to know because the nurses need to know about the science and if you want to know more you can ask them but I don't feel you need to know everything's ins and outs, well I wouldn't."
 (Female, 16-24; self-identified non-reader)

"The concept of this is great. To have this it's the closest you're going to get to a handbook." (Male, 25-34)

"I particularly like the pictorial step by step guides, this really helps colleagues / parents who may have literacy issues. The colours are also eye catching, especially with the use of a different colour for each section." (Flying Start service)



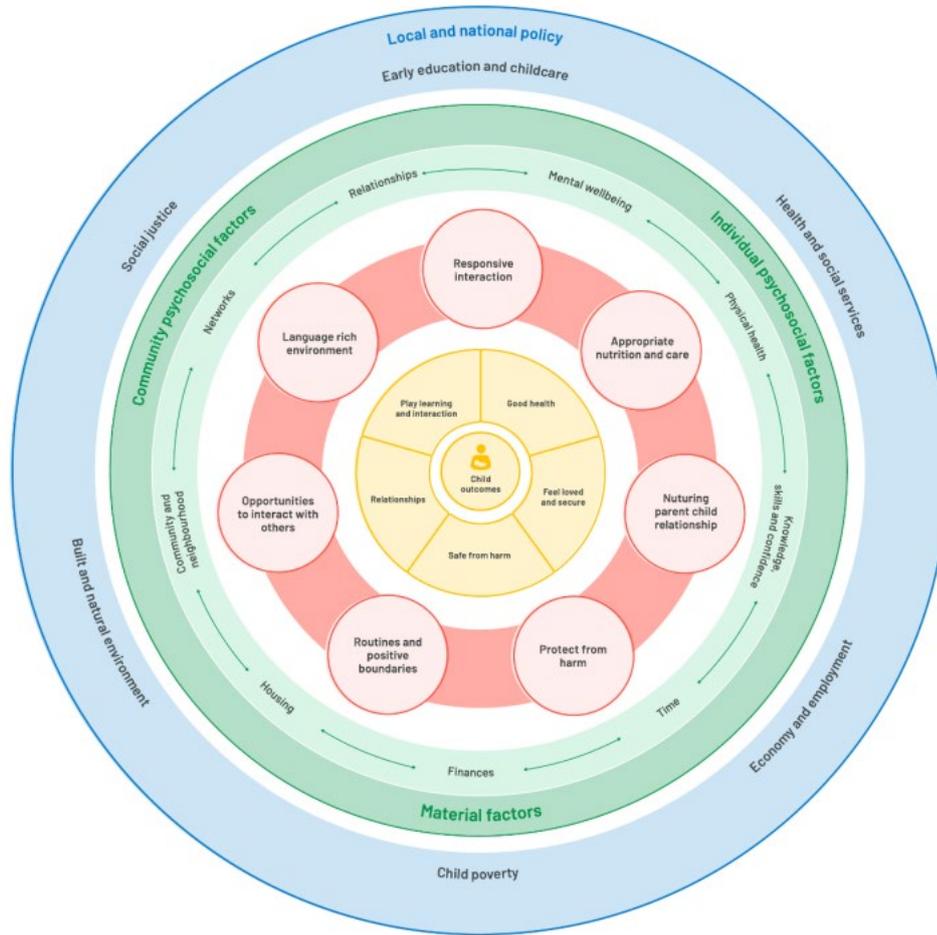
4.2 A Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents

The First 1000 Days Programme launched an animation to promote understanding of a Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents. Designed for professionals, the resources describe the conditions that support parents to give children the best start in life and set out the role of policy and practice in creating those conditions.

The [Public Health Approach to Supporting](#) parents brings together current theory, research evidence and insight into the experience of parents and professionals in Wales conducted between 2018 and 2022. This new animation complements the summary report and full technical report already published to provide a bite size introduction to the importance of structural and psychosocial factors in creating the conditions for families to thrive (see Figure 1).

Significant work has been done to communicate the key messages from the report, both internally and externally, including the role the wider determinants of health play in enabling families to flourish. This has led to greater awareness and recognition of the importance of baby's early experiences for their current and future health and wellbeing across Public Health Wales, enhancing cross-organisational working.

Figure 1. The Public Health Model of Parenting Support



5. Strategic Priority 3: Promoting healthy behaviours

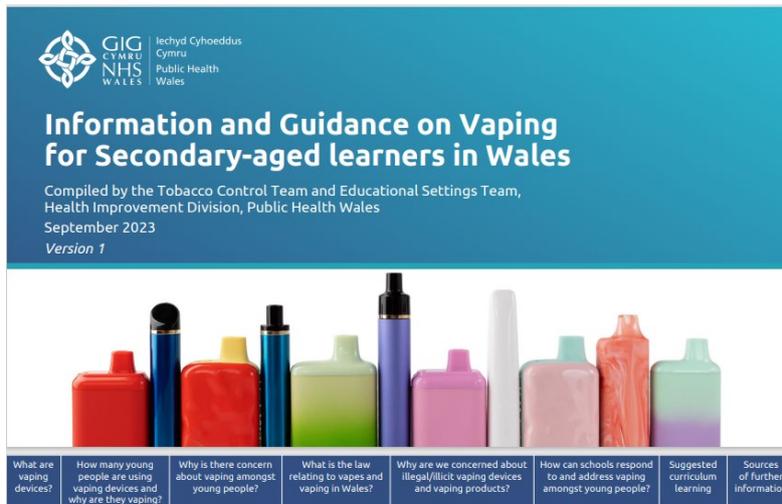
Promoting healthy behaviours includes action to reduce disease, disability and early death that result from things such as smoking, our diet, how active we are and how we use alcohol and other substances. The opportunities to make healthier choices are influenced by our social and economic circumstances and importantly by the actions of the commercial players who produce these products and our work focuses in creating an environment in which people are not being encouraged to take the least healthy option.

5.1 Incident Response Group for Vaping amongst Young People

In July 2023, we convened an Incident Response Group in response to rises in vaping amongst children and young people in Wales. Given the rise in concerns about vaping use by young people, and the absence of any previous experience to draw on with such a new substance, we adopted an approach usually applied in health protection incidents and outbreaks. The approach brings together expertise from across the system, examines the problem and undertakes an investigation to come to a conclusion about what measures should be taken to address the issue.

The issue of vaping is particularly challenging given that there is a need to balance the possible benefits to existing smokers with the need to protect children and young people from harm. This balance meant that discussions were not always easy and full agreement on all of the steps needed was not reached. However, we were able to make some significant recommendations which are being considered by the relevant agencies.

As part of the work also produced guidance for schools on vaping to support them in addressing the problems they were facing. The work has been well received and we had had very positive feedback. The work aligned activity across sectors in Wales, gained significant media interest, supporting consistent public health messaging in relation to vaping.



5.2

Reducing smoking amongst young people

In Wales we have achieved significant reductions in smoking rates in school age children. However, the largest growth in smoking rates takes place after leaving school with 17% of 18–24-year-olds reporting being a smoker (National Survey for Wales, 2023), an age group with one of the highest proportions of smokers in Wales. To address this, the Tobacco Programme undertook work during 2023/24 to gather evidence and insight to inform a programme of work aimed specifically to address uptake in this age group. This included data analysis, insight research and behavioural analysis which has provided the foundation to develop interventions to reduce smoking initiation in this age group during 2024/25.

5.3 All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan

The Children’s Nutrition and Obesity Team have made significant advancements in the implementation of the All Wales Breastfeeding Action Plan.

We have led work, using a Delphi process, with colleagues across the Four Nations to agree a set of definitions and time points for collection of infant feeding indicators which will enable comparisons between nations in the future. This work has then informed a quantitative data infant feeding framework for Wales which will be embedded within the new digital offer for maternity records and the current Healthy Child Wales programme.

For the first time in four years, we brought together infant feeding and Public Health colleagues from across Wales to celebrate and share local innovation to improve breastfeeding rates at our Bright Spots event in October 2023. The event was attended by the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and the Chief Midwifery Officer. Evaluation demonstrated the value colleagues place on being able to come together to share best practice and we are already aware of Health Boards rolling out new initiatives based on work that was presented at the event.

5.4 School Food

The Children's Nutrition and Obesity Team has established a specific work programme to maximise the potential of school food to reduce inequalities and improve children's health and well-being outcomes.

The Team have supported Welsh Governments review of the Healthy Eating in Schools Regulations by public health leadership and specific public health nutrition expertise. We have published a rapid review of the scientific evidence to inform what needs to be updated in the nutrient and food based standards. phw.nhs.wales/publications/publications1/rapid-review-of-nutritional-and-food-based-standards-in-wales-a-technical-report/

In October 2023, we facilitated a Theory of Change workshop to support stakeholders, including Welsh Government, to generate a collective agreement and understanding of the need for Regulations and the outcomes the policy should be aiming to achieve in relation to child health and wellbeing. The Theory of Change went to the internal WG Food in Schools Board in March 2024.

5.5 Weight Management Pathway

Our work to support people to achieve and maintain a healthier weight has included the ongoing development of the Healthy Weight Healthy You digital offer which was launched in January 2023. This site provides a Level 1 offer for the All Wales Weight Management Pathway and has been used by over 100,000 since the launch.

We undertook a review of progress across Wales in implementing the All Wales Weight Management Pathway and co-produced a set of standardised measures and definitions for use across Wales to help Health Boards and the Welsh Government measure the impact of the pathway.

We have also developed an addendum for the Welsh Government for the weight management pathway in Wales for the new weight management medications and have responded to national consultations for weight management.

5.6 Whole Systems Approach

We have continued our work to engage and mobilise all sections of society to understand how they can contribute to reversing the levels of unhealthy weight in Wales. In each area of Wales the Director of Public Health leads work with local partners to agree a priority area to focus on to agree on collective action. We are supporting this work by helping to provide tools, training and facilitate shared learning. Part of this work has been to engage Public Service Boards (PSBs) in prioritising healthy weight and to date eight PSBs now have healthy weight as one of their priorities.

We have developed and launched video assets to support the understanding of systems work and support engagement with system partners in Wales. We have commenced work focussing on the role of planning in helping the shape healthier environments and hosted national systems events drawing together partners from across Wales to discuss and develop this work. This work will be taken forward during the coming year.

5.7 Making Every Contact Count

Making Every Contact Count (MECC) is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day to day interactions that organisations and individuals have with other people to support them in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

In order to embed MECC principles and preventive approaches across the health and care system, the MECC logic model was revamped and disseminated. Logic models tell the story of our project or programme in a diagram and a few simple words. It shows a causal connection between the needs we have identified, what we do and how this makes a difference for individuals. It is informing work to develop action by the MECC national working group to establish MECC within the curricula, training, registration and accreditation of health professionals and within recording, reporting and human resource processes across the NHS.

Online MECC training was expanded to include a refreshed generic level 1 e-module which was piloted with the 1000-strong optometry workforce in Wales, with 70% take-up within two weeks of its launch.

5.8 Education and Health

The Educational Settings team continued work to develop the new delivery model engaging with over 100 schools in developing the new Minimum Standards which we hope to formally introduce in the coming year subject to Ministerial agreement.

We have also worked closely with teachers across the system to develop a new approach to resources to support the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales Health and Wellbeing area of learning and the work has received positive feedback and will continue into next year.

5.9 Physical Activity

The national Travel to School Hands Up Survey, co-ordinated by the Health Improvement Division's physical activity programme, continues to gain profile and momentum as it approaches its third year of delivery; in 2003 over 40,000 pupils took part, with engagement from 270 primary schools across Wales. It provides stakeholders across Wales with vital intelligence on travel to school that can be used for strategic action. The data is also used by schools to develop their active travel

plans and engage pupils in discussions on active travel to school. In 2024, we are working closely with stakeholders to encourage even more schools to take part.

We have worked closely with Swansea University's Environment and Health Research Centre to determine what proportion of children across Wales could feasibly actively travel to school. This work, involving utilisation of the SAIL Databank, will enable schools and strategic stakeholders to assess potential for change regarding active travel to school. It is intended that data will be free to access.

As a key action of the Active School Travel National Delivery Plan, the physical activity programme has taken forward the development of a place-based approach to active school travel. During 2023-2024 we have worked with several secondary schools across Wales, along with key stakeholders in each place, to address issues relating to active travel to school and take forward actions. The aim was to develop and test an intervention, with a view to further refinement and piloting in 2024-2025. A vital component of the approach is meaningful engagement, not only with schools and their pupils, but also with those local stakeholders who have the power (remit and funding) to take forward actions; this includes local authority active travel officers, local public health teams, and local councillors. With a focus on identifying local-specific, environmental areas for improvement, the approach has already demonstrated success with improvements already agreed to walking and cycling routes.

Working alongside our new Research and Evaluation Team, we have conducted in-depth qualitative research to understand the experiences of projects undertaking evaluation activities as part of the Welsh Government funded Healthy and Active Fund programme. The work, which will be of great value to future thinking around supporting evaluation of community-based projects, has already been accepted for presentation at academic conferences and is currently under consideration for peer-reviewed journal publication. The work has demonstrated an effective approach to embedding rigorous research and evaluation into public health practice and policy.

We have continued to work closely with key partners to develop the Daily Active Whole School Approach to Physical Activity, taking forward this important agenda to maximise opportunities for children and young people to be physically active in and around the school day. This is an important component of the national Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales strategy, being part of the healthy settings theme.

6. Strategic Priority 4: Supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system focused on prevention and early intervention

6.1 Embedding Prevention

During the last year, we have focussed on prevention across the health and care system, through developing programmes of work which provide cross-cutting approaches to embedding prevention, as well as programmes related to addressing key clinical risk factors for the burden of disease in Wales. Our cross-cutting programmes include:

- ❖ The development of a ‘Prevention-Based Health and Care’ Framework, co-produced with key strategic partner organisations across health and care in Wales, to enable prevention to be embedded in a coordinated and systematic way.
- ❖ The development of resources to enable the workforce to [Support Healthy Behaviours in Primary Care](#) and thereby take demonstrable action on prevention.
- ❖ Working in partnership, with the Welsh Government, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and the Welsh School for Social Prescribing Research, to launch the [National Framework for Social Prescribing](#). The National Framework includes key publications developed by Public Health Wales and co-produced with partners, namely [A Glossary of Terms](#) and a series of [Case Studies](#), showcasing social prescribing in Wales.

In relation to addressing key clinical risk factors, we have:

- ❖ Led the establishment of the national ‘Tackling Diabetes Together’ programme, working with the NHS Executive, health boards and the wider public health system with the aim of slowing the rate of increase of the prevalence of type 2 diabetes and to increase the number of people living well with diabetes in Wales.
- ❖ Continued to coordinate the delivery of the [All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme](#) (AWDPP), publishing the [year one activity report](#), the [first](#)

[national process evaluation of the AWDPP](#), and an [updated protocol](#), alongside a [diabetes prevalence report](#).

- ❖ Concluded the delivery of the [Primary Care Obesity Prevention Plan](#), with a report to follow in late 2024, on the progress and learning to date.
- ❖ Established a new Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Programme, in collaboration with the National Strategic Clinical Network for Cardiovascular Disease.

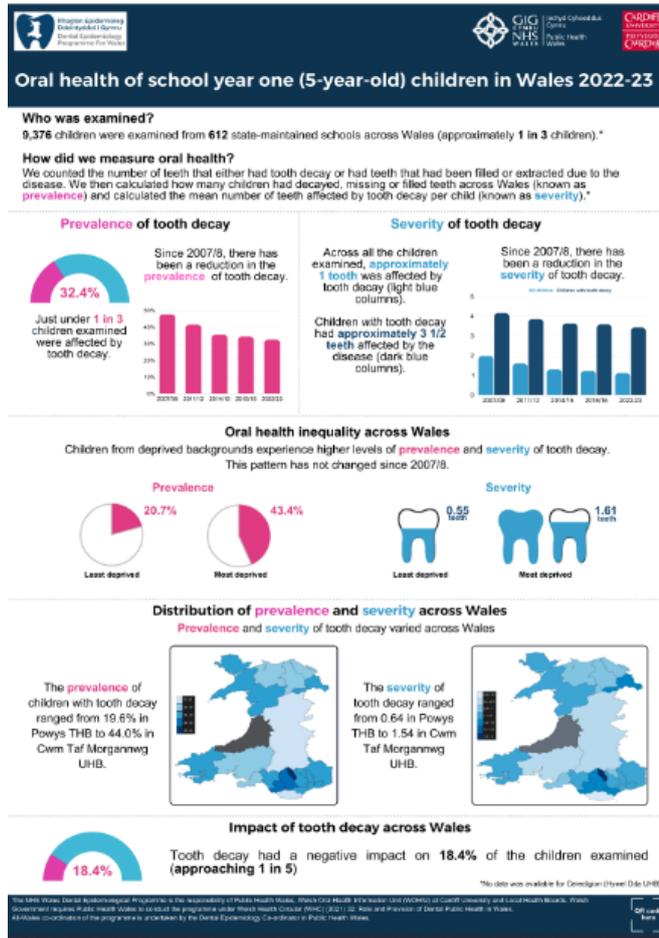
The role of prevention in ultimately supporting the development of a sustainable health and care system is recognised by stakeholders and we hope to build on this to support a wholesale shift towards prevention in the coming years.

Our work to increase prevention through primary dental services saw us provide ongoing input into the national dental reform programme. There are ongoing inequities in access to dental care for children in Wales with 64.5% of children living in the least deprived areas accessing dental care compared to only 42.6% children living in the most deprived areas in Wales during 2021-23. We have made a case for change into prevention and outcome focussed and need based dental care provision that also aims to monitor and reduce inequity in access and outcomes. We showed rising incidents of [mouth cancers in Wales](#) with more than 300 people in Wales diagnosed in 2019, with incidence rising year on year since 2002.

Our [Dental Epidemiology Programme](#) examined over 9,300 Year 1 school children and [our report](#) showed a reduction in both prevalence and severity of the disease but persistent oral health inequalities.

We provided national leadership and coordination of the Designed to Smile programme that resulted in 1,003 nurseries and schools in deprived areas providing a supervised daily tooth brushing (50,705 children participated) and 35,795 children receiving at least one application of fluoride varnish through 544 schools.

We also worked with the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) to highlight how CIW can support our care home programme ([Gwen Am Byth](#)) to improve residents' oral health and associated quality of life.



6.2 Transforming Primary Care

Monitoring and evaluation of the Primary Care Model for Wales (PCMW) has been progressed by the Primary Care Division during 2023/24 including the development and roll out of a second cycle of cluster peer reviews, building on learning captured in the [Cluster Peer Review report for 2022/23](#) that was published in the spring which highlighted the key themes and areas for action identified from the peer discussions.

Colleagues working with/ within clusters were engaged over the last twelve months to co-produce a [cluster self-reflection tool](#) which was piloted in January and launched at the end of March 2023. The proposed reflective discussions aim to gather insight from clusters, on how 'mature' cluster working is against the PCMW and Accelerated Cluster Development (ACD) outcomes, including insight on the factors within the primary and community care system that hinder or facilitate their progress towards A Healthier Wales.

Work has been progressed to review and refresh the PCMW and ACD maturity matrix, to better reflect cluster working today. This work will continue into 2024/25 as partners focus on ways to strengthen integrated health and social care that

delivers place-based care. Scoping work has also progressed to develop a suite of key indicators for primary care, again this work will be concluded in 2024/25.

Raising awareness of cluster working and the PCMW has also been progressed, through the development of a [PCMW page](#) on the [Primary Care One website](#) (PCONE) and through development of Primary Care cluster related questions within the Public Health Wales Time to Talk survey. The Time to Talk Survey highlighted that further work is required to engage our local communities in the work of clusters.

The Primary Care Division has continued to work closely with the Strategic Programme for Primary Care, providing public health advice and support on a range of topic areas, including the development of a suite of Primary Care Metrics, engagement with the ACD Action Learning Group and ongoing support for the development of ACD resources on the Primary Care One website. We have undertaken a mapping exercise to understand the range of services providing Primary Health Care to vulnerable groups across Wales, progressed work on the development of a health inequalities framework for primary care and working with the Strategic Programme for Primary Care developed a Tier 2 service specification and resource portal for primary care health inclusion services.

The Primary Care One website (PCONE) is hosted by our Primary Care Division and provides information and signposting to a range of topics relevant to primary care cluster working in Wales. The website is an important resource for partners and has been reviewed and refreshed to ensure the PCONE content continues to meet their needs. The review has included a Welsh Language Audit, development of new pages and resources, and work to reduce duplication, streamline information, and improve the User journey and engagement. This work will continue to take a quality improvement approach, including stakeholder engagement, to further develop this important partnership resource.

6.3 Helping to build a Well-being Economy in Wales and beyond

Public Health Wales has been working closely with the Welsh Government and the World Health Organization (WHO) to progress and implement a Well-being Economy that focuses on people and the planet over profit. Our WHO Collaborating Centre helped the [Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the Welsh Government and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. This work includes building capacity, bringing knowledge and resources, and sharing best practice from across countries and sectors, to inform investing in prevention, reduce health inequalities, and support more resilient and sustainable communities and NHS in Wales. It also strengthens Wales global leading role as a 'live innovation site' for wellbeing, health equity and prosperity for all, leaving no one behind.

6.4 Social Value Masterclass delivered with high interest across the NHS and wider Wales

A [Social Value Masterclass 'Measuring the Value of Public Health'](#) delivered to increase the understanding and highlight the need to capture wider social, economic and environmental value of public health programmes. This is essential to inform evidence and Value-Based financing and investment in health and well-being. The webinar is an introduction aiming to build organisational and NHS capability to measure public value and wellbeing impacts, applying a Social Return on Investment (SROI) and other relevant methods.

6.5 Public health economics research and evidence synthesis informing policy and practice

We have led, coordinated and published a special *Frontiers in Public Health* e-book on [Translating Health Economics Research into Public Health Action: Towards an Economy of Wellbeing](#) including 15 research peer-reviewed papers from 67 authors globally. We have also developed a series of evidence reviews published in international peer-reviewed journals to help inform Value-Based finance and investment.

The latest ones in 2023/24 include an editorial contribution in the *European Public Health* journal titled: [From 'evidence-based' towards 'value-based' public health: measuring what matters most](#); An article in the *Frontiers in Sports and Active Living* journal titled: [The social return on investment of physical activity and nutrition interventions – a scoping review](#) and an article in the *Public Health* journal titled: [Advancing the social return on investment framework to capture the social value of public health interventions: semi structured interviews and a review of scoping reviews](#)).

6.6 Footprint Analysis to explore the contribution of the NHS to the Welsh Economy to drive the Well-being Economy

Supporting progress of the Well-being Economy in Wales, we have made the case for population health and wellbeing to be a driver of economic development in Wales and evidenced the economic importance of the healthcare sector to the Welsh economy is explored. We are in the process of publishing a summary document (that is based on an [academically published paper](#)) that outlines that the healthcare sector has an above average contribution in four explored economic aspects of the Welsh economy (output, income, employment, value-added), according to its impact on the surrounding economic ecosystem.

6.7 Social Value and Health Impact Assessment

To progress the application of the Social Return on Investment Framework we have conducted a study applying an innovative approach by using a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) lens and approach, in combination with the Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework to understand the health impacts and social return on investment of a self-sampling service for Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in an open prison setting in Wales.

The report and supporting documents can be accessed here: [Self-administered sexual health testing in an open prison setting in Wales: A Health Impact Assessment and Social Return on Investment analysis - World Health Organization Collaborating Centre On Investment for Health and Well-being \(phwwhocc.co.uk\)](https://phwwhocc.co.uk)

6.8 Safeguarding

Our NHS Safeguarding Service has continued with its strategic role in coordinating and supporting the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network. The Network provides a vital bridge between strategy and operational delivery at local level and supports the delivery of national policy developments in NHS Wales health boards and trusts to discharge their responsibilities to keep children and vulnerable adults safe. Key practice improvements included, 'Take 5 Read Safeguarding Bite size' resources and dedicated work to support the emotional well-being of families and staff in the review of how we respond to unexpected child deaths. The [Annual Report of the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network](#) published in the Summer reported against the Network's key achievements in 2022-2023, a year that marks 10 years of Network delivery.

The Safeguarding Maturity Matrix (SMM) is a self-assessment tool which supports safeguarding quality improvement across NHS Wales. The tool is completed by the seven health boards and three NHS trusts within Wales with information collated by the National Safeguarding Service to provide a national picture of the NHS Wales safeguarding services across Wales. Over the last period the SMM tool was updated by the team in Public Health Wales in line with the Duty of Quality guidance to ensure safeguarding services across Wales are safe and reliable and can contribute to organisational and national quality reporting. The tool was developed with the involvement of the Chief Nursing Officer, Executive Directors of Nursing and the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network.

An NHS framework template has also been developed that supports NHS Wales organisations to publish consistent safeguarding strategies. The national document facilitates local variation in their portfolios and service delivery to ensure consistency. The template and example strategy aligns with the Health and Care Quality Standards for use by corporate safeguarding leads with Public Health Wales acting as the test organisation. All organisations have been supported in creating their strategies over the last twelve months via a Task and Finish Group.

A Quality in Safeguarding Statement for NHS Wales which outlines 10 key quality priorities was co-created to support implementation of the Duty of Quality and to

strengthen safeguarding assurance. The statement clarifies what ‘good’ looks like in safeguarding within NHS Wales and facilitates awareness of the people most in need of our protection. The document was produced with stakeholders representing social care in Welsh Government, the NHS Executive and Health Inspectorate Wales. Its ambition is to ensure alignment with Health and Care Quality Standards, and other developing multi-agency assurance processes. This work will be further strengthened by the Chief Nursing Officer’s review of Strengthening Safeguarding in Health which is due to be completed in May 2024.

6.9 Improvement Cymru

The Welsh Government commissioned Improvement Cymru to lead on a national discovery report for Maternity and Neonatal services in Wales. The report and its findings were published in July 2023. Since that time, the Maternity and Neonatal team appointed to lead this work has turned its attention to supporting national work in two areas with the aim of minimising variation. The focus has been on identifying and escalating the care of the deteriorating mother or baby, and work to minimise mother and baby separation by reducing term admissions to neonates. This work launched in January 2024.

Improvement Cymru has worked collaboratively with the Wales Cancer Network and health boards, to engage Toyota on Deeside to utilise their teaching and coaching methods to find ways to optimise care pathways to support cancer pathways, with the aim of minimising the time from referral to the point where a decision is made as to whether the patient has cancer or not. The learning on the Toyota Production System methodologies, along with local coaching has been applied in three phases to a small group of multi-professional teams across Wales and also three Pathology departments. The work has been well received with teams recognising the opportunity to use their learning to re-organise their local processes, optimise capacity and improve the flow of the care pathways. Particular improvements are being seen in the overall time that patient samples are taking in cellular pathology. Improvement Cymru is also working with the National Planned Care Programme to explore opportunities to scale and spread the learning.

Improvement Cymru supported the development and roll out of the Duty of Quality e-learning package across Wales.

In addition, the Improvement and Innovation Hub in Public Health Wales has delivered a comprehensive 2-year plan to support our improvement ambitions. This included a clear framework for tier 1, 2 and 3 improvement work across the organisation. Drawing on learning from year 1, the support for tier 1 strategic priority work has recently been strengthened by aligning improvement science with a strong project management approach.

7. Strategic Priority 5: Delivering excellent public health services to protect the public and maximise population health outcomes

Public Health Wales provides a wide range of services to the public and support to partners which help protect the public and prevent harm so that the population of Wales has the best health outcomes possible. This includes services to:

- ❖ protect the public from the effects of infections, including supporting vaccination, diagnostics and response
- ❖ protection against exposure to environmental, harms, such as air pollution
- ❖ delivery of our national screening programmes
- ❖ prepare for and respond to emergencies
- ❖ support infection control in healthcare and
- ❖ support effective use of antibiotics and reductions in antibiotic resistance.

We believe that to get the best for the population of Wales we have to be able to aim for excellence in all we do. We think an excellent service is one which is:

- ❖ **safe** – services should be able to show that they are safe and that they have more benefits than risks
- ❖ **timely** – services should be there when needed and respond promptly
- ❖ **effective** – services should get the outcome they are supposed to
- ❖ **efficient** – services deliver in the most efficient way and
- ❖ **equitable** – services should work harder for people who need more
- ❖ **person-centred** – services should regularly and actively engage with people and put their needs at the centre of delivery

How we deliver our services to protect and improve the health of the people of Wales is paramount, the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act (2020) highlights the important of the whole NHS delivering high quality services which will improve care in the future. As a result, our collaboration with our partners to deliver excellence together is of paramount importance for us.

7.1 Key achievements

The winter of 2023/24 reminded our teams of the significant impact that outbreaks of infectious disease can have on individuals and communities. The large number of cases of whooping cough stretched our services and our health protection teams worked hard with to respond to the threat. In December 2023, Wales also experienced its first outbreak of measles since the Pandemic in the Cardiff Area. With measles cases increasing across the UK, the Health Protection Division worked

with partners to stop the outbreak, and to provide advice on vaccination, infection prevention and response to make sure that Wales was prepared for cases.

Infection Services have continued to provide testing across Wales, receiving and processing over 1.4m samples. This included increased activity to support the system to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and increased elective activity. During this period, several projects have been delivered including:

- ❖ National procurement contract for the extension of syndromic rapid molecular testing,
- ❖ Replacement contract for the gastrointestinal molecular testing service and
- ❖ Contract for specialist centralised CNS testing at the Welsh Specialist Virology Centre.

We deliver, monitor, and evaluate seven population-based screening programmes, and coordinate the all-Wales managed clinical network for antenatal screening. Our vision, across the national screening programmes in Wales, is that everyone eligible for screening has equitable access and opportunity to take up their screening offer using reliable information to make a personal informed choice. The aims of the programmes are either to reduce incidence of disease or improve early diagnosis to reduce the impact of the disease. The division has a strong record of evaluation and a comprehensive programme of improvements and developments in line with policy decisions.

From October 2023, we started to invite people aged 51 to 54 years of age to the bowel screening programme. We also increased the sensitivity of the test kit to better detect bowel cancer in those who are at risk. Recovery of the breast screening programme and the diabetic eye screening programme from the impact of the pandemic has made considerable progress this year. The breast screening programme has recovered timeliness significantly and is on track to fully recover by summer 2024. The diabetic eye screening programme has recovered backlog and working to improve timeliness of screening offer.

We continue to provide a world leading genomics service, with Public Health Wales sequencing in excess of 25,000 pathogen genomes in the last twelve months. Recognising the increasing importance of genomics in public health, we have continued to develop our genomics capability by standing up a cross-organisational Public Health Genomics Programme, which has overseen key achievements including;

- ❖ The completion of the £16M Canolfan Iechyd Genomig Cymru (CIGC) - the Welsh Genomic Health Centre – which sees the colocation of Welsh clinical, public health and academic genomics activity in a single location. Public Health Wales played a key role in the completion of the centre, and forms one of its first occupants. CIGC will provide a key facility to drive the development of genomics

in Wales, supporting the growth of genomics services developed and delivered in partnership with our patients and the population of Wales.

- ❖ Worked with GPW partners to develop a £1.5M joint strategic business case for an All-Wales solution for long-term storage of genomic sequence data, to support the growth of genomics activity in Wales.
- ❖ Introduced improvements to our existing services to reduce turnaround times and failure rates, resulting in information being available more quickly to support clinical or public health action.

Our services are also focussed on delivering key aspects of excellence, with examples provided below.

Safe

Breast test Wales have commissioned a new fleet of mobile screening vehicles. The fleet of units have been designed with infection prevention controls in mind. All surfaces can be easily cleaned and they are designed to have effective air circulation. They are also designed to have a one-way system option so service users do not have to cross with each other improving both safety and the patient experience. The mobiles are hybrid to reduce reliance on diesel fuel. We use patient feedback about the environment in which they are screened to make further improvements if required.

Timely

In March 2023, the Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm screening programme had fully recovered from the pause implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. This coincided with the 10-year anniversary of the programme - a service that continues to save lives by detecting asymptomatic aneurysms amenable to early surgery to prevent fatal unexpected rupture. Breast Screening and Diabetic Eye Screening programmes have made significant improvements toward recovery and are reducing the number of people waiting to be screened, in part helped by effective targeting and prioritisation and the opening of a new screening venue at Kimberley House earlier in 2023. The Diabetic Eye Screening Programme have also implemented the low-risk pathway for diabetic eye screening, enabling focus on offering timely appointments to those at greater risk of sight-loss.

Approximately 700 rapid laboratory tests are now performed across 14 laboratories each month. A number of infections cause issues in hospitals in terms of Infection Control. For example, outbreaks of norovirus can cause closure of wards and loss of bed capacity, patient colonisation with resistant organisms can cause issues for placement and flow through the hospital. More rapid identification of such alert organisms/conditions can lead to more rapid control and ease bed pressures. We have introduced rapid molecular testing capability across the laboratory network for infections including Norovirus, Clostridium Difficile and Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). This testing is now delivered in 14 acute hospitals

across Wales and can give results within two hours, compared with conventional testing which would typically take 1-2 days.

The Environmental Public Health team works to protect health and prevent health harms, and increase the health benefits, linked to environmental hazards and a changing climate. Through this work it also aims to narrow the inequalities associated with health outcomes of environmental hazards and a changing climate, by improving health for all. The team did this by, primarily, delivering a reactive service that responded to environmental public health incidents and enquiries. In the past year, we have provided timely response to acute incidents, such as the explosion at Treforest Industrial Estate and other longer-term situations including the Withyhedge landfill incident.

Bowel screening can help find bowel cancer at an early stage, when an individual does not have any symptoms. Early detection is important because at least 9 out of 10 people will survive bowel cancer if it is found and treated early. Bowel screening also detects and removes pre-cancerous polyps that if left in the bowel could develop into cancer. The uptake to the programme has improved with 65% of people taking up their offer. Expansion of the programme to include those aged 51-54 increases access to early identification of Bowel Cancer.

Effective

Health Protection has put a greater focus on research capacity within the division whilst still supporting actions outlined in the Measles and Rubella elimination strategy, creating outcome-linked datasets across two disease areas and trailing outbreak and cluster detection capabilities.

In November 2023, we completed our review of the All-Wales Communicable Disease Outbreak Control Plan. Led by Public Health Wales and involving partners from across the health protection system, including Health Board Directors of Public Health and Local Authority Directors of Public Protection. The plan builds on learning from COVID-19 and helps clarify roles and responsibilities to enable a more timely and co-ordinated response across the system. Integrated in the plan is the introduction of standards for outbreak response, which is a helpful tool for continuous improvement.

Our Screening Division Laboratory provides five of the health boards in Wales with a service which sends out and then tests faecal immunochemical test (FIT) for patients who have symptoms of bowel cancer in line with national optimal pathway. Referrals to the Symptomatic FIT service are made by the clinician using an online form specific to this service. The referral leads to a test kit and supporting information being sent to the patient's home address; the patient then completes the kit and returns it to the laboratory using a supplied pre-paid envelope. Upon receipt in the laboratory, the details are checked, and if there are no issues it is tested and the result issued within 24 hours to the clinician.

From June 2023, people who are at low risk of diabetic eye disease are invited for diabetic eye screening every two years instead of every year and everyone else is screened as usual. Evidence shows that if no diabetic eye disease is found in last two diabetic eye screening then it is safe to be screened every two years.

A revised version of the Public Health Wales Emergency Response Plan was approved by our Board in May 2023. It describes our roles and responsibilities in response to an emergency or major incident, as well as providing a framework for its activation and deactivation arrangements, command and control structures, and recovery arrangements. This ensures that when emergencies happen, we are able to respond effectively to support the protection of human health in line with our obligations. To help validate the plan and associated arrangements, exercise CYHYRAETH was held in January 2024, facilitated by our Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response Team to test the arrangements at all levels.

Efficient

Antimicrobial resistance is recognised as a significant global threat and Welsh Government reviewed its AMR strategy in advance of the UK-wide national action plan refresh. The Welsh AMR strategy sets out recommendations for the NHS in Wales and the HARP team will play a key role in providing leadership, support and advice to the system to deliver the targets for Wales. On the ground, our health protection and infection teams have supported the investigation and control of an exceedance of AMR-related bacteraemia in a hospital, providing epidemiological and genomic sequencing support to inform the management of the incident. It is a good example of pro-active and integrated work between our teams.

Training remained a point of focus and energy and the training teams developed a tool for the specialist portfolio students in infection division that allows greater oversight on progress and requirements. While the demand on the service to 'deliver and train' with the same cohort of specialist and senior Biomedical Scientist (BMS) remains high, there is growing traction and the service will see newly qualified specialist BMS staff increase over the coming 12-18 months as part of our 'Grow our Own' programme.

Equitable

Within our Communicable Disease Health Inclusion Programme, the Sexual Health annual report was published in July 2023 providing an overview of the Sexually-Transmitted Infection (STI) testing service. STI testing in Wales is at a 10-year high, the postal service testing facility accounted for at least 50% of all tests for people in Wales, providing an opportunity for STI testing for people who do not want to seek help and advice from their GP or sexual health clinic. This has meant, we have been able to identify cases of STI that would not otherwise have been diagnosed and to offer treatment to control further spread. Further work with our partners has continued with the review the sexual health priority areas 2020-2024.

Public Health Wales in collaboration with Improvement Cymru and Learning Disability Wales has coproduced a new video and easy read guide to support people with a learning disability to explain the process of being invited and having a vaccination. The resources aim to support people with a learning disability to make informed choices about vaccination. These resources will also assist in making people aware of how they can request reasonable adjustments to help support them when having a vaccination. The video features a person and their carer visiting her GP surgery for her flu vaccine. It highlights some of the key facilitators to support a person with a learning disability to have their vaccination, including requesting reasonable adjustments in advance of her appointment, and help for needle anxiety.

Person-centred

Our Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme is also working closely with partners to deliver the ambitions of the National Immunisation Framework for Wales, improving our approaches to tackling inequalities in uptake and the provision of expert advice into new governance structures through a transformed vaccine service. The National Immunisation Framework puts a focus on co-production of patient information with the public and with partners. Public Health Wales in collaboration with Improvement Cymru and Learning Disability Wales, has coproduced a new video and easy read guide to support people with a learning disability to explain the process of being invited and having a vaccination. The resources aim to support people with a learning disability to make informed choices about vaccination. These resources will also assist in making people aware of how they can request reasonable adjustments to help support them when having a vaccination. The video features a person and their carer visiting her GP surgery for her flu vaccine. It highlights some of the key facilitators to support a person with a learning disability to have their vaccination, including requesting reasonable adjustments in advance of her appointment, and help for needle anxiety.

The Screening Engagement Team has identified gaps in accessible information provision across the screening pathway. An accessible project group has been established. The aim of this work is to ensure information is available in British Sign Language (BSL) and Easy Read from invitation to assessment. The initial focus has been breast screening. Two new BSL resources are now available. The videos 'Helping you decide' and 'Reasons why you need another test' aim to support people make informed decisions about taking part in screening and prepare people who are invited back for further tests. An Easy Read version of the 'Reasons why you need another test' has also been developed. Sensory loss organisations have supported the development process. Their feedback has led to the videos being broken down into short chapters and having the option of Welsh and English subtitles.

The Environmental public health team has been working collaboratively with partners, in developing longer-term work plans to protect the Welsh public from environmental public health hazards. For example, the team have been working with Visit Wales to increase awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide, and working with clinical colleagues to develop notification and management pathways to

reduce children's exposure to lead. The team also plays an active role in commenting on planning and permitting applications, as well as responding to wider consultations.

Furthermore, the team continuously strives to take longer-term "proactive" action to protect and promote public health. This involves working closely with teams in other parts of our organisation and with external partners, such as Welsh Government, on multiple other areas of work. For example, over the last year, the team has been involved in the Clean Air Advisory Panel and the development of the Clean Air Bill, the introduction of the 20mph legislation, and legislation around high-risk coal tips.

7.2 Leadership and partnership working

Wales did not see any measles cases between 2020 and summer 2023. The amount of measles circulating globally was increasing following a reduction during the pandemic. There was a potential for cases and clusters in Wales, causing preventable harm. In 2023 Public Health Wales alerted partners that there was a significant health threat from measles due to reduced uptake of MMR vaccine in some areas. Through 2023, we have worked with partners on refreshing the measles and rubella elimination action plan. In response to an outbreak in Cardiff in December 2023, we worked with Welsh Government and the NHS Executive to identify immediate evidence based actions that needed to be taken to reduce the threat. Public information was developed and work was undertaken to ensure that the NHS in Wales was ready to respond to a significant measles outbreak. These included targeted work to improve vaccination uptake in school aged children and in health care workers as these are settings where transmission occurs. Tools were developed which allowed partners to measure improvement in MMR uptake in schools on a regular basis, and research was undertaken to understand what factors were associated with low uptake (e.g. birth order).

The Maternal and Child Screening programmes (Antenatal Screening Wales, Newborn Bloodspot Screening Wales and Newborn Hearing Screening Wales) adopted a digital first approach to the provision of pre-test information in late 2022. The digital resources include animations, images and text based information. Accessibility tools are embedded in the web pages, including read aloud, language selection and alternate font size/colour settings. A multi-faceted evaluation was undertaken in 2023/24 and concluded that implementation of digital first for the provision of antenatal and newborn pre-test information was a success with all aims achieved. The co-production approach adopted with health boards proved effective, with a key role played by our staff in the production of resources and training to support staff to address additional needs and digital exclusion.

Genomics activity in Wales is delivered through a Wales-wide partnership – Genomics Partnership Wales (GPW). A key objective set by Welsh Government was the extension and deepening of the partnership through the co-location of key NHS and academic partners into a centre of excellence for Genomics. Our Genomics

Programme and Pathogen Genomics Unit have played central roles in realising this vision – in the form of Canolfan Iechyd Genomig Cymru (CIGC), the Welsh Genomic Health Centre. CIGC is the culmination of five years of work and over £15M in Welsh Government funding to bring together the genomics expertise of three organisations – Public Health Wales (in the form of the Pathogen Genomics Unit and Public Health Genomics Programme), Cardiff and Vale University Health Board’s All Wales Medical Genomics Service and Cardiff Universities’ Wales Gene Park.

The new facilities provide high quality lab, office and training spaces, and CIGC is already providing an environment to improve current service delivery and reduce costs. The collaborative environment it offers has already provided new opportunities for collaboration, including engagement our patients and the public, collaboration with industry and the development of shared platforms for data storage. Now fully moved in, our Public Health Genomics Programme team and Pathogen Genomics Unit are beginning to exploit the opportunities presented through this world class genomics facility shared with NHS and academic colleagues in order to develop new genomics services to improve health and wellbeing, and reduce inequality for the people of Wales.

8. Strategic Priority 6: Tackling the public health effects of climate change

Throughout the past year, we have been developing a cohesive approach to climate change across the public health landscape, for example through leveraging our well-established partnerships including the World Health Organization and other prominent public health agencies in the UK. We have focused on refining our understanding of climate change surveillance needs while advancing our approach to research.

8.1 Decarbonisation

We have reviewed our current Decarbonisation Action Plan (2022/24) and developed our next plan (2024/26). To support our Decarbonisation Action Plan, a staff Travel Survey was undertaken during November-December 2023 by the Health and Sustainability Hub in partnership with the Behavioural Science Unit to help inform and support behaviour change to more sustainable travel options. Results published in March 2024.

We also undertook a research project with a report 'Addressing Single-Use Plastic and Waste in Public Health Wales' Microbiology labs' produced, to be published on 22 April 2024. In November 2023, we also published research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and shift to more agile working, on Public Health Wales' carbon footprint report and supporting infographics.

8.2 Adaptation

A significant milestone was achieved with the publication of a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on Climate Change in July 2023 by the Wales HIA Support Unit. It illuminated key challenges and potential co-benefits specific to Wales. This assessment serves as a guiding beacon for future prioritisation efforts. The HIA was followed in September 2023 by the publication of a dedicated resource which showcased how HIA can be used to inform and influence climate change action and adaptation planning as well as at a strategic level. A cross-sector event with public bodies followed in October 2023 to promote the resource and discuss how the evidence can be applied.

The work has been utilised by a wide range of public bodies and is being replicated by other nation states for example, New Zealand and Scotland. The work has been presented at several national and international fora including the Healthy City Design conference, the European Public Health Conference and the upcoming International Association of Impact Assessment conference in April 2024.

8.3 Engagement

We have worked with our Improvement and Innovation colleagues to run a staff Climate Change challenge hack using the Simply Do platform – over 220 staff engaged with this process and 23 project ideas were submitted on travel, waste, greener IT and training. A climate change training offer was developed and promoted to staff, and since April 2023, over 100 staff (5% of our workforce) have participated in climate change training, workshops and presentations. We also presented our work at a number of events and conferences, both nationally and internationally, with a focus on Health Impact Assessment and supporting the NHS towards achieving Net Zero.

Some of our external news stories associated with climate change can be found below:

- ❖ [Public Health Wales moves to tackle the health effects of climate change](#) (December 2023)
- ❖ [Health Impact Assessment approach aids public sector bodies in development of climate change adaptations](#) (October 2023)
- ❖ [Health Impact Assessment highlights urgent need to protect health and wellbeing as the climate changes](#) (July 2023)
- ❖ [Call for big business to do more to help consumers tackle climate change](#) (April 2023)

8.4 Primary care

The Primary Care Division continues to provide leadership, advocacy and support for primary care contractors to take actions against climate change. The [Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme](#) reported a successful Year 2 with over ninety teams registering and a total of 2362 climate friendly actions implemented by practices since its launch in June 2022. January 2024 marked the [relaunch](#) of Year 3. We worked with participating practices to prepare two publications for professional journals including [Sink or Swim, and Community pharmacy in Wales](#) reaches net-zero emissions which highlighted the work being implemented in Wales.

We published a suite of video case studies showcasing actions made in each of the primary care contractor settings to address climate change [Video Case Study:](#)

[Community Pharmacy](#), [Video Case Study: General Practice](#), [Video Case Study: Primary Care Dental](#), [Video Case Study: Primary Care Optometry](#).

We received a second round of funding from Welsh Government Health and Social Care Climate Emergency National Programme to pilot a Champions educational outreach model, gain behavioural insights into enablers and barriers to participation in the Scheme, and to develop a tool for carbon calculations. We will be using these to inform future aspects of the Scheme.

We provided leadership and public health expertise to the Approaches to Healthcare project, a subgroup of the Health and Social Care Climate Emergency National Programme through deputy chairmanship. We also continue to lead and drive forward a Task and Finish group to address 4 initiatives identified within the [NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan \(2021\)](#) as a priority for high carbon emissions related to inhaler use and disposal. Through this group we worked with Cardiff Metropolitan University to research about factors that would encourage or deter patients from returning inhalers to the community pharmacy for safe disposal. We also co-authored and published the [Decarbonisation: inhaler prescribing, use and disposal 2023–2030 A national strategy for Wales](#) and are now developing plans and mechanisms to work with stakeholders across the UK to deliver the strategy.

8.5 Surveillance

Over the past 12 months we have undertaken a significant amount of work on climate change and health surveillance. This is a relatively new area for Public Health Wales and other public health agencies, and we are working collaboratively with partners to develop surveillance indicators and methods. We have set up a surveillance sub-group of the Climate Change Programme Board to enable us to progress this work and to understand the impact that climate change is having, and will continue to have, on public health in Wales.

8.6 Environmental Public Health

To support adaptation to a changing climate, Public Health Wales' advice relating to extreme weather has been reviewed, simplified and updated. To support this, a standard operating procedure has been developed by the Environmental Public Health team to guide when extreme weather advice to the public should be issued. More broadly, concerns over the medium to long term risks to the quality and sufficiency of private water supplies has led to a review of research evidence, as well as disease and ill-health reports received by the health protection teams. As a result, a number of recommendations for future actions have been made, including reinstating regulations around risk assessments of private water supplies.

A climate risk assessment has been drafted for prisons and is now being tested; this aims to help governors decide what actions may be needed to manage climate

related risks. This is also likely to be applicable to other settings, possibly including schools and care homes. Guidance on managing Blue Green Algae has recently been updated and sits with new guidance on Swimmer's Itch; this is a first for the UK and describes high risk situations for swimmer's itch, as well as how to avoid and manage it.

8.7 Research

We have engaged significantly with our academic colleagues within the UK and internationally to progress the research agenda into the impacts of climate change on public health in Wales. We have also supported six research funding bids centred on climate change and public health.

9. Enabling the successful delivery of our Plan

Our enabling functions have been pivotal to the successful delivery of our strategic priorities, playing a critical role in the leadership and delivery of a number of major areas of work, alongside the delivery of our full range of statutory functions and activities.

9.1 Our People

Our people are at the heart of our work to reduce health inequalities and to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales. Our People Strategy provides our long-term direction and priorities to shape the organisation, our culture and ways of working. Our long-term people ambition is to develop a flexible, sustainable, diverse and thriving workforce, with the capability and capacity to deliver our strategic priorities. Given how critical our people are to our success, we want to attract, retain and develop great people, to create a positive impact in the communities we serve throughout Wales.

Our key objectives and achievements for the year are summarised below:

9.1.1 Culture and Experience

Our aspirations are to have a compelling cultural narrative and a consistent organisational culture, a staff value proposition that embraces flexibility and inclusivity and where our people understand and advocate for diversity, we work how and where it works best and we attract and recruit people to reflect the communities we serve.

- ❖ Having refreshed our Long-Term Strategy during 2023/24, we have engaged widely about organisational culture and why it is so important. Our communications about strategy and culture have become increasingly joined up,



with our Chief Executive leading a “Spotlight on Culture” event, which focused on the importance of our culture, values and behaviours.

- ❖ Our people have told us of the ideal culture that we want and need in Public Health Wales - one which will encourage people to maximise their contributions and commitment to the organisation, enhance the quality of what we do and be consistent with our values and purpose. Regular discussion with our Executive Team and other senior leaders, together with exploration of the results with colleagues throughout the organisation, has enabled us to develop a high-level plan to deliver the desired culture.
- ❖ Two cohorts of staff have attended an accredited Cultural Advocates programme, designed to help in providing knowledge and developing skills that will enable them to confidently and effectively support senior teams as part of our culture work.
- ❖ Behaviours are core to culture and in June 2023, we launched our Being Our Best behavioural framework, following extensive engagement with colleagues about how we want our values – *working together, with trust and respect, to make a difference* – to show up in our everyday working experiences.
- ❖ Driven by our strategic intent to shape work around life and to empower everyone to have more choice in how they work, we have transitioned our award winning ‘Work How It Works Best’ approach from a pilot programme into more established ways of working, developing a policy and additional supporting resources. Our teams, managers and colleagues continue to work together to balance the needs of the work we do, the team and individuals.
- ❖ We have designed and launched Leading with Impact workshops for all our people managers. Focussing on culture, Being Our Best and the importance of engaging conversations, the intent is to give managers confidence to use the tools that exist and their skills to shape employee experience, enabling them to lead authentically and confidently for their teams.
- ❖ Our new Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028 was developed this year to meet our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion obligations, placed upon us by the Public Sector Equality Duties, Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations and Welsh Government.
- ❖ Building on the Silver Plus that we were awarded the previous year, we achieved Gold in the Diverse Cymru Cultural Competence assessment and are the only NHS Wales organisation to achieve this level of recognition.
- ❖ Our Staff Networks continue to develop and grow and are an integral part of our ways of working
- ❖ Our “Welsh Week” included a range of activities to promote the use of Welsh in the organisation. This included the award of “Welsh Learner of the Year”.

9.1.2 Organisational Effectiveness

Our aim is to plan and work towards our agreed optimum workforce size and shape which is aligned to our Long Term Strategy, have clear approaches to develop or access the skills we need with increased flexibility, deployment of resources where needed, reducing silos and building collaboration to support organisational performance.

- ❖ We have worked with our Executive Team to establish the principles by which we will design our organisation structures that will support the evolving shape of the organisation and contribute to organisational effectiveness.
- ❖ We have implemented our Directorate approach to commissioning internal and external support for programmes of change through the development of resources, principles and frameworks that can also support the planning and resourcing for our initiatives.
- ❖ Working in partnership with our Trade Union colleagues, we have developed new resources to enable our managers to lead people through change, and to understand and improve people's experience of change, aligned to our organisational values and the NHS Wales Organisational Change Policy.
- ❖ A significant amount of work has been undertaken to identify critical roles (current and anticipated) across the organisation. Short-term, medium-term, and long-term resourcing strategies have been developed to provide solutions and interventions for all critical roles identified.
- ❖ We have piloted a new formal learning and development programme for leaders and managers and established a Leadership and Management Academy.

9.1.3 Business and Processes

We are working towards having policies, processes, and supporting services which drive and enable high performance through managers and key people metrics to inform planning, decision-making and team management.

- ❖ Several policies have been reviewed and updated in partnership with Trade Union colleagues and through staff consultation to deliver more streamlined and simplified processes.
- ❖ The People and Organisational Development intranet space has been re-designed that include supporting resources to support easy access for people managers.
- ❖ We have defined and established key performance indicators aligned to our people, which include time taken to recruit, appraisal, and training compliance, and People Support customer satisfaction rates.
- ❖ An e-rostering system which supports efficient rostering of shifts has been successfully implemented across three Laboratories and will continue to be rolled-out across 2024/25.

- ❖ Worked in conjunction with our Improvement and Innovation Hub, we are providing training to all People and Organisational Development colleagues on approaches to process improvement.
- ❖ Changes to several processes, forms and templates to improve customer experience and increased process efficiency.

9.1.4 Challenges and Risks

We continue to face challenges which impact our people and the work we do, as well as the wider population of Wales. Factors such as an ageing population, larger numbers of people working to a later age, socio-economic challenges, the impact of the pandemic, and climate change all affect the workforce we require and the workforce that is available to us, now and in the future.

We need to be able to recruit and develop a more diverse workforce that better reflects the communities we serve and provide insight into the needs and motivations of all our service users. We have further work to do to establish a workforce planning process and framework, with clear roles and responsibilities and embed strategic workforce planning within our long-term, integrated planning cycle.

We must harness and utilise advances in technology; support learning agility and investment in continuous development and re-skilling and to find, develop and retain the talent needed to execute our strategic priorities for emerging skills, particularly around digital, data and technology.

We also want to embed ways of working that will attract and inspire a multi-generational workforce to work effectively together, valuing each other's skills and perspectives, and supporting people's changing needs by increasing the opportunities for flexible and agile working.

We support the use of the Welsh language and bilingual careers (as demand for Welsh language services increase) and we are developing and supporting our leaders to lead with compassion; to manage a diverse workforce and to embed change effectively, building relationships with our partners to deliver our services and strengthen access to capacity and talent.

9.1.5 Learning

We will take forward the learning from the evaluation of our pilot Leadership and Management Academy programme, together with feedback and data obtained from the Leading with Impact sessions, in the design and delivery of an ongoing programme of leadership and management development.

Our inclusive and consultative approach means that we actively listen to our people, respect, and value their feedback and act, learn and develop. We will develop a strategic approach to employee engagement which responds to the results of the

NHS Wales Staff Survey, medical engagement survey, culture assessment and other inputs.

9.2 Quality, Improvement and Risk Management

We aspire to be an exemplar in quality. Over the last 12 months, we have further developed our approach to quality and continuous improvement through 'Quality as an Organisational Strategy' utilising this framework to effectively describe organisation design, and participate in system transformation and continuous quality improvement. We are committed to operating this system designed for quality, driven by the needs of the population we serve. This in turn creates a culture and environment that supports our staff and provides a great place for staff to work and thrive. This approach supports achievement of our strategy and strategic priorities.

Our Quality, Nursing, and Allied Health Professionals Directorate is responsible for enabling, advising, collaborating and supporting quality and integrated governance across the organisation. In 2023/24, some of our key achievements included:

9.2.1 Quality and Improvement

As part of the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020, the Health and Care Standards have been reviewed as part of the [Duty of Quality](#) implementation. As a result of this review process, Welsh Government has replaced the Health and Care Standards with a new quality reporting framework, based on the Health and Care Quality Standards. The Quality Standards are framed around the six domains of quality and the six quality enablers.



The new reporting framework and the Duty of Quality sets out a clear framework for quality management that will strengthen the connection between the Duty of Quality, Quality Standards, and the wider quality management process in NHS organisations in Wales.

From 2023/24 onwards, a new Annual Quality Report is being published to report on the steps Public Health Wales has taken to comply with the Duty of Quality and to show how the organisation has made improvements in the quality of its services. To see further detail on how we have done that this year, please read the [2023/24 Annual Quality Report](#).

9.2.2 Records Management Project

This project is delivering the implementation of SharePoint Online as a single Electronic Document Management System for us to support collaborative working, reduce staff time in searching for and using documents and records, and ensuring that Public Health Wales is compliant with legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

We are already seeing improvements in governance and version control and external partners (for example, health boards and local authorities) can join us in collaborating on documentation, reducing the time it is taking to complete vital pieces of work. This is a significant organisational change, which has been received very well by staff and engagement in the project has been high. This is an exciting development for us which will continue to support staff to deliver our strategic priorities.

9.2.3 Service User and Patient Experience

The Directorate has a responsibility for engagement and collaboration, and leads on service user experience for Public Health Wales. This includes leading the Young Ambassadors Programme, which held a successful residential in July 2023 attended by 23 young people from across Wales. The Young Ambassadors who attended the residential, provided feedback on a national campaign and on our Long Term Strategy, to help shape and design services.

In 2023/24 our team won the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award at the Welsh Experience National Awards. This is a peer nominated award for partnership working and an inclusive whole system approach.

The Directorate also won the Health and Care Research Wales 2023 Impact Award for the Health Experiences of Asylum Seekers and Refugees research project, which was a collaboration with Swansea University, to recognise the impact the study had and continues to have.

9.2.4 Risk Management

Managing risk is essential to running a safe, effective, progressive and successful organisation. It should be at the heart of decision-making, business agendas and allocation of resources at both an operational and planning level and should aim to identify opportunities to innovate and invest, alongside the need to reduce risk.

During 2023/24, we reviewed and revised our strategic risks and corporate risks in line with the newly refreshed Long-Term Strategy. As a result of this review, our strategic risks have been refocussed to best describe the most significant organisational risks we face through a Public Health Wales lens, and through that of Quality. By utilising this approach, we are able to concentrate our activities on the mitigating actions that are within our control, but also highlight the areas that require our influence within the system, in order to achieve our intended outcomes.

It is anticipated that by end of Quarter one of 2024/25, a revised risk appetite framework that will enable appropriate use and implementation of risk appetite, will become functional across the organisation. This will mean that our staff from front-line workers right through to our Board will be able to understand and apply a risk appetite to their specific area. This will promote consistency, and ensure our risk appetite, risk processes and mitigation match our ambition that we have laid out in our Long Term Strategy.

We have also been trying to simplify and standardise our reporting templates, and the process to further align quality indicators, performance and risk management.

9.3 Maximising the use of digital, data and evidence

In developing our strategy, we focused on where we can add most value for the people of Wales. We also focused on how we enable and drive the delivery of our plan through embracing more agile and data driven approaches, along with adopting innovation where possible, placing users at the heart of what we do and embedding quality improvement.

With the diversity in programmes of work within our Data, Knowledge and Research Directorate, we have delivered many key achievements across the organisation and in collaboration with key partners. To support the delivery of our Long Term Strategy, we developed and launched our Digital and Data Strategy, as well as our Research and Evaluation Strategy.

Some of the key achievements in **Research and Evaluation** this year include:

- ❖ Published the [Unpaid Carers in Wales](#) report which raised important insights to support the Wales Carers strategy and how unpaid carers can be identified and supported in Wales.
- ❖ Published the [All-Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme \(AWDPP\) annual activity report](#) with the Primary Care Division and [Formative Process and Value-Based Evaluation of AWDPP](#) with the Swansea, Aberystwyth, Bangor University (SABU) Consortium.

- ❖ Established a comprehensive evaluation plan that will assess the effectiveness of key programmes within the organisation and NHS Wales; including the AWDPP, [Prehab2Rehab](#), HAPUS Strategic Partnership, HAPUS National Conversation, Making Every Contact Count (MECC) e-learning modules 'Having Healthy Weight Conversations, level 1 and 2', the [Mind our Future Project](#), Communicable Disease [Preventive Behaviours](#) ('Hand Washing') Communications Campaign, and successive winter [2022/23](#) ('Power Up') & [2023/24](#) ('Coats') respiratory viruses vaccination communications campaigns.

A key focus for us is to improve how we can access and interpret data within Wales and other nations to inform policy decisions. As our **Data and Data Science Teams** are embedded in the organisation this is now enabling us to maximise the use of data and how it can be shared securely and produce high quality scientific solutions. These specialist teams are leading the way in Wales by actively collaborating to help model health patterns for Wales and improve planning and outcomes for the population.

A selection of some of the Data Science work achieved this year include:

- ❖ Diabetes- A case for change was made on projections and cost savings
- ❖ Discovery phase completed on diabetes data flows
- ❖ Developed scenario modelling
- ❖ Projections work for surveillance
- ❖ Demand and capacity modelling
- ❖ Hospital Bed projections
- ❖ Cardiovascular Disease analysis and projections completed to support Prevalence of Disease
- ❖ Exploring the potential of Artificial Intelligence
- ❖ Undertaking National Data Resource pilots to assess the capabilities of the platform.

Our Digital and Data Teams have completed:

- ❖ National Data Resource discovery
- ❖ Diabetes data discovery
- ❖ Health Protection discovery
- ❖ Breast Test Wales Cohort selection system that is planned to go live in May 2024
- ❖ Automation system for Diabetic Eye Screening Wales which is due to go live in July 2024.

Our Observatory and Cancer Analysis Team provide data analysis, evidence finding and knowledge management to support decision makers and the public with health information. We continue to develop and improve our Statistics and Dashboards to meet the needs of our users. These include:

- ❖ School Health Research (SHRN) Dashboard. This will be expanded to include secondary school data set in 2024 and primary school data in 2025 in collaboration with Cardiff University and Welsh Government;

- ❖ Public Health Outcome Framework
- ❖ Cancer reporting tool Official statistics release in June 2023 with incidence figures up to 2020 for breast, colorectal, lung, ovary and prostate cancer;
- ❖ Rapid cancer data (pathology) developed and published in December 2023
- ❖ Primary Care cluster dashboard published in December 2023

Our directorate is also responsible for the statutory reporting of our Registries. The teams process multiple sources of information, some of which remains affected by the pandemic. The Registries activities include:

- ❖ Congenital Anomaly Register and Information Service (CARIS) national level surveillance report published. This reporting included; Congenital anomalies data, childhood rare diseases data and antenatal detection rates data on 13 November 2023;
- ❖ Adult Rare Diseases (ARD). We have worked closely with stakeholders (NHS Wales Executive, clinicians, third sector, and academia) to support the development of this registry. Securing the long-term data collection permissions for diseases registry has been challenging;
- ❖ Child Measurement Programme (CMP) report published in May 2023. This is a national level surveillance programme covering all children in Wales aged 4-5 years in reception class in school. The Official Statistics Annual Report 2021-2022 data published 23 May 2023
- ❖ Welsh Cancer Intelligence Surveillance Unit (WCISU) worked with others to produce the cancer reporting tool and rapid cancer data.
- ❖ Child Death Review (CDR). This includes the publication of the [Water related fatalities in children and young people under 25 in Wales 2013-2022](#) and was completed in collaboration with Water Safety Wales and The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The report aims to inform water safety professionals in Wales to prevent future deaths.
- ❖ Real Time Suspected Suicide Surveillance (RTSSS) report published.

Knowledge Mobilisation is integral to how knowledge is obtained and used both within and between organisations. The team are leading the organisation to define 'Publication Principles and Standards' and implement our Impact Monitoring Approach. The team have:

- ❖ Designed and implemented an impact monitoring approach, including an annual service user survey
- ❖ Piloting tools for ongoing monitoring
- ❖ Co-producing and agree publication standards and supporting resources

Our Evidence Service informs health policy, practice and decision making which underpins public health action through producing systematic reviews, evidence maps and rapid summaries. The service is designed to help users help themselves by signposting to important public health evidence as has developed a number of supportive training resources and sessions to help empower others to access appropriate information. The Evidence Service has also produced a number of user led products, including:

- ❖ An agile scope on maximising the uptake of pre-habilitation [interventions](#)
- ❖ A series of Topic Evidence Summaries on pre-habilitation interventions for those on elective surgery waiting lists
- ❖ In collaboration with Data Science and Data Engineering teams, we embarked on a project to digitise our [suite of evidence maps](#) to enhance accessibility of key evidence
- ❖ A review of reviews of whole systems approaches to reduce obesity (due for publication in June 2024).

In addition, as part of our ongoing collaborations with the Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Collaboration we have produced a number of high impact rapid reviews:

- ❖ A [rapid review](#) of the effectiveness, efficiency, and acceptability of surgical hubs in supporting planned care activity published in April 2023.
- ❖ A [rapid review of the effectiveness of interventions for addressing digital exclusion in older adults](#).
- ❖ A rapid review into the use of [Artificial Intelligence](#) in diagnostic radiology, which was commissioned by HCRW Evidence Centre.

The activities within the directorate require specialist skills, some of which are new to the organisation, and we are keen to share best practise and create communities where staff can be supported with additional training and have an established route to access subject matter experts. To improve our resilience, we are also working with our colleagues in People and Organisation Development to create new talent career pathways and roles that align across Wales and other nations to be able to offer competitive employment opportunities for in demand skills. We have:

- ❖ Developed job families for Data, Data Science, and Evaluation professionals
- ❖ Implemented an Evaluation Community of Practice, hosting regular bi-monthly events with invited external expert speakers covering a range of evaluation topics and methodologies
- ❖ Co-hosted communities of practice event and published the [Evaluating Behaviour Change Interventions](#) report with the Behavioural Science Unit
- ❖ Established a community of Data Researchers, Engineers, Analysts, Managers and Scientists (DREAMS).

9.4 Long Term Strategy

Following its Board approval in March, we published our new Long Term Strategy in May 2023, which sets out the actions we will take to achieve a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives, and where all people have fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being.

During 2023-24 a number of enabling strategies were published which help us deliver our Long Term Strategy these include our:

- ❖ Digital and Data Strategy
- ❖ Refreshed International Health Strategy
- ❖ Research and Evaluation Strategy.

To ensure the strategy was accessible to a wide range of staff and stakeholders, we worked with the Plain English Campaign to produce a plain English version of the strategy that received the Crystal Mark – their seal of excellence for documents.

We have also started work on a roadmap for each of the six Strategic Priorities – mapping the key stages needed to achieve our 2035 Objectives set out in our Long Term Strategy. This work has been developed through the continuation of cross-organisational and multi-disciplinary thinking led by our strategic priority leads, each with support from an Executive Team sponsor. For each of the six strategic priorities we have set out our successes during the first year of our strategy implementation as we work together to achieve a healthier Wales.

9.5 Partnership working and engagement

Improved population health outcomes and tackling health inequalities can only be achieved through working in partnership with others. We have continued to strengthen our organisational arrangements to enable purposeful collaboration when working with our partners and the public.

Our Approach to Engagement enables an underpinning approach for equitable, effective public engagement, ensuring the voice of the people we work with and for is at the heart of what we do and how we do it. It covers four main types of engagement:

- ❖ Public Information and General Consultation
- ❖ User Feedback
- ❖ Coproduction
- ❖ Community Empowerment.

We have recognised that engagement with the public, including our service users, customers and stakeholders, is a core public health activity and essential in delivering against our strategic priorities to protect, promote and improve the health and well-being of the population of Wales. During 2023-24, Our Approach to Engagement further focused on amplifying the voice of people we want to work with and for through the development of a User Experience Framework, informed by data and evidence.

9.6 Financial Performance

We produced a Welsh Government approved Strategic Plan and met our financial duties to break-even for the financial year 2022-23 and for the rolling three-year period 2020-23. We also met the NHS Wales target to pay 95% of non-NHS contracts within 30 days.

The Trust submitted its draft financial statements within the required timescales, which were considered by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and the Board in May 2023. Audit Wales issued an unqualified opinion on the 2022-23 Financial Statements.

See the Annual Accounts Report for a detailed overview of our financial performance in 2023/24.

9.7 Sustainability

As set out in our strategic priority 6, our new Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan 2024-2026, details the actions we will take over the next two years to be a carbon-negative organisation (removing more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than we release). The plan builds on our previous progress and includes actions we are taking across the organisation to support the foundational and circular economy agendas and contribute to the goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. We have integrated these agendas within the plan due to the significant overlaps between them and to ensure that we have one plan that demonstrates our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint.

As a key provider of NHS services across Wales, we have an important role to play in supporting sustainability activities. We align our own ambition with key priorities and targets set out in the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan to ensure we reduce our carbon emissions to work to achieve Net Zero emissions. We will continue to work in co-ordination with our partner NHS health boards and trusts and with NHS Wales's Shared Services Partnership, to deliver our 2024-2026 Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan.

We have delivered several projects over the last two years to reduce our environmental impact that contribute to the organisation's decarbonisation, circular and foundational economy agenda. Examples of these successes and achievements are set out below:

- ❖ **Changing our estate** - We have continued to rationalise the estate, supporting staff to work differently in line with our Work How it works Best policy. This has reduced our carbon footprint by 60 tonnes CO₂e a year. During these projects circular economy principles have been applied and included the donating of furniture to communities and diverting waste from landfill. We have also modernised our Wrexham office and established two new Screening Hubs, upholding the principles of bringing health to the high street and supporting local communities. Facilities such as showers and bike racks have also been installed to support active travel. In addition to this the organisation achieved [ISO 140001 accreditation](#) in May 2023 covering our three main sites.
- ❖ **Embedding sustainable travel** - In November 2023, our Abdominal Aortic Screening (AAA) Screening Fleet was replaced with hybrid and electric vehicles.

Plans are also under development for the replacement of the existing fleet within Diabetic Eye Screening Wales (DESW), scheduled for replacement over the next two years.

We continue to support and enable our staff to work from home reducing the need to commute daily. Staff are encouraged to consider the impact on the environment when deciding how they travel to/from work and the cycle to work scheme has been promoted to staff as well as Healthy travel champions identified.

Our Health and Sustainability Hub continues to support action, build capacity, inspire and educate. Additional information on our key deliverables in 2023/24 can be found in the Well-being of Future Generations Report.

In line with Welsh Government guidance, we will be publishing a separate Sustainability Report on the Public Health Wales [website](#) once finalised data is available in September 2024.

9.7.1 Foundational economy

In 2023/24 we have continued to support the wider system and embed the foundational economy principles within our approach to value and innovation. This includes seeking to embed the foundational economy principles in our strategic decision making processes to ensure that they are considered when making decisions and changes to our services.

Alongside setting up a foundational economy steering group in 2023, some of our key achievements during the year include:

- ❖ Developing and sharing knowledge, resources and tools to help build a Wellbeing Economy in Wales with the NHS as a driver and a Foundational Economy. This includes starting to embed and promote a Value-Based approach to budget spending and investment prioritisation towards population health, well-being and equity.
- ❖ Working with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership procurement services to undertake a data review of our existing suppliers to establish the region and Health Board of Welsh spend, enabling further understanding of the Welsh Supplier base and areas for future action.

As an anchor organisation we have great potential to further support and promote the foundational economy and we will continue to build on our achievements in future through the delivery of our long term strategy and strategic plan.

10. Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015

10.1 Shaping our work

The Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG Act) remains an enabling framework for us to work together for a healthier Wales, now and for future generations. We are embracing the sustainable development principle and exploring ways to strengthen our ways of working to shape how we work to maximising our impact.



As an organisation, we continue to identify opportunities to strengthen our approach in developing our strategies and plans, how we create the right structures, policies and processes and how we lead, communicate and involve our staff and partners, so that we work together towards a common purpose.

The WFG Act has been applied to empower our staff to help shape the development of our long-term strategy. The strategy integrates with priorities of the wider system, to ensure it is fit for purpose and effectively addresses pressing public health challenges. We are also contributing to the global health and sustainability agenda, in synergy with our partners nationally and internationally.

We will continue to ensure that our planning and delivery enable us to take a long-term preventative approach, focused on involving the public and collaborating with our partners, to deliver integrated solutions as we tackle the challenges that we face today and tomorrow. The Five Ways of Working will continue to be at the core of everything we do.

Our refreshed Well-being statement was published alongside our revised strategy and demonstrates how we fulfil our duty to carry out sustainable development and how we set our objectives to maximise our contribution to achieving each of the seven well-being goals. It also demonstrates how we incorporated fair work as part of the changes due to the Social Partnership and Public Procurement Act (2024).

We continue to identify areas of our work which exemplify the sustainable development principle and where we can maximise our contribution towards the well-being goals. Our work focuses on health inequalities, the social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainability, whilst continuing our work on environmental sustainability. Recent examples include:

- ❖ ***Shaping Places for Well-being in Wales*** - This programme provides a national resource to support Public Services Boards (PSBs) in taking a theory and evidence informed systems approach in their work to influence wider determinants of health as they implement their well-being plans, sharing learning between PSBs and across the UK.



- ❖ ***Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing*** - The Whole School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing supports schools in embedding a culture, ethos and activity that promotes mental and emotional wellbeing of the school community, strengthening prevention and early intervention approaches in education settings. Over 90% of schools with secondary aged learners are now working to embed a whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing.
- ❖ ***The First 1000 Days programme*** - A Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents -This approach recognises the socioeconomic, cultural and environmental context in which families live and the impact this can have on parenting. It makes a case for greater action on the wider structural factors at play within the system to improve long term outcomes, break cycles of disadvantage and reduce inequalities.
- ❖ ***Socio-Economic Toolkit*** - The Socio-economic Duty came into force in 2021 and aims to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. The toolkit offers a guide to using the Socio-economic Duty in policy and practice in Wales and provides examples and tools to embed the Duty into systems and approaches to ensure it makes a systematic difference.
- ❖ ***Beyond the present*** - How to apply long-term thinking to reduce health inequalities - In partnership with the Future Generations Commissioner's Office, we have launched a resource to help organisations use long-term thinking to reduce health inequalities. It provides tools and case studies to show how we can move on from just treating disease to promoting good health and preventing illness whenever we can. Helping organisations to think for the long-term can enhance current projects and processes and improve the quality of the important decisions that drive their work every day.
- ❖ ***All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme*** - Led by Public Health Wales, this programme offers targeted support to people who are at an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, with the aim of preventing them from developing this condition. This national programme supports people to make changes to their lifestyle that can delay or prevent the onset of type 2 diabetes.
- ❖ ***Public Health Wales Decarbonisation and Sustainability Plan*** - This new plan outlines the work the organisation will be undertaking over the next two years and beyond to meet the public sector target of net zero by 2030 and for us to meet our carbon negative objective target by 2035 as set out in our Long-Term Strategy. Due to the overlap between decarbonisation, foundational and circular economy, biodiversity and our role in implementing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, this new plan also includes actions that contribute to these sustainability agendas.
- ❖ ***Public Health Wales Carbon footprint Report and Infographics*** - Since the COVID-19 pandemic we have all seen a significant change in the ways of working in the last few years. The Health and Sustainability Hub undertook research to

understand the impact these changes have had on our organisational carbon footprint. This report looked at four key emission areas (procurement, travel, business/ site and homeworking) and identified key priority areas where we could make a real difference to reduce our carbon emissions supporting our net zero ambitions.

- ❖ **Assessing our Culture** - We recognise that an ideal culture - one which encourages people to maximise their contributions and commitment, enhances the quality of what we do and is consistent with our values and purpose and is fundamental to organisational success. We have been assessing our culture to make sure we are building ways of working that are right for our organisation and identifying areas of improvement. Our [Being our Best behavioural framework](#) supports our commitment to bring our values to life, describing how working together, with trust and respect, to make a difference should be apparent in our everyday experiences.

As part of our culture work, Public Health Wales is proud of its commitment to creating a workplace with diversity and inclusion at its core, where everyone can be their authentic self and give their best. We are proud to be a Stonewall Top 100 employer and a Disability Confident Leader, and to have been awarded Gold level in the Diverse Cymru Cultural Competence scheme for our racial inclusion. As a public health institution, we aim to embody inclusivity in all aspects of the work we deliver for the people of Wales.

10.2 The Health and Sustainability Hub

Working towards a future where people and planet can thrive.

We help staff and our partners to embed sustainability into their work and help each other to respond to the climate and nature emergencies. We champion the WFG Act and Environment Act and support our new strategic priority “Tackling the public health effects of climate change”.

We have been actively increasing awareness and understanding of the WFG Act especially the 5 Ways of Working. Several presentations and workshops have been delivered to support staff and teams to embed the Act into everyday work. The majority of our staff are aware of the WFG Act but less understand the ‘5 ways of working’ and how it can benefit them and the organisation.

The Act is increasingly identified as an enabling framework for our corporate areas of change and we are exploring how to strengthen the integration of all the duties to a greater effect. We understand that the WFG Act provides a key mechanism for supporting a ‘Health in All Policies’ approach and the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a useful tool to ensure that the aims of the sustainable goals are considered throughout.

We have strengthened our partnerships with others including the Future Generations Commissioner's Office (FGCO) and also formed an internal Champions group to further collaborate and learn from each other. We have continued our formal partnership agreement with the FGCO on futures and long-term thinking but we are also working together to explore opportunities to broaden and strengthen this collaborative working across the five missions set out in the Commissioner's Cymru Can strategy.

We are looking ahead to assessing our ways of working in partnership with the FGCO. This will be an important assessment to drive change and improvement. It will inform our actions going forward to improve the ways of working and to maximise our contributions as an organisation to the national well-being goals.

11. Concluding remarks

We know that the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing rise in the cost of living continues to have profound effects for the people of Wales, both in terms of the direct health impacts, but also the broader and longer-term implications for our health and well-being. Our progress in delivering our key strategic priorities in 2023/24 is a great achievement for the organisation and reflects the exceptional work of our staff in an extremely busy and challenging time in Wales.

During the last year, we have had a major focus on developing our work in order to respond to cost-of-living as a public health crisis. We have engaged locally, regionally and nationally to develop our work on employment, education and housing as determinants of health. We have also continued to support a health in all policies approach, advising on the development and consultation of Welsh Government regulations for Health Impact Assessment.

We continued our development of the mental wellbeing programme of work by engaging extensively, as well as continued our work to develop and implement the National Trauma Practice Framework by developing an implementation plan and a children and young people's version. We continued to support the embedding of a Whole School Approach to Mental and Emotional Wellbeing, as well as our work on the importance of the First 1000 Days of a child's life in setting the foundations for lifelong health and wellbeing.

We have implemented key actions in relation to national strategy and policy priorities including Healthy Weight Healthy Wales, A Smoke Free Wales and the Curriculum for Wales, as well as continuing to support the development and implementation of the All Wales Weight Management Pathway. We have also supported the improvement work on smoking in pregnancy and help me quit in hospitals, and reintroduced the JUSTB programme to prevent children taking up smoking by targeting schools. We also re-established our work to develop a public health approach to preventing harm from substance use, and supported Welsh Government in responding to the planned introduction of the Gambling Levy.

We have continued to focus our efforts on prevention across the health and care system. We led the establishment of the national Tackling Diabetes Together programme working alongside our partners, and continued to coordinate the delivery of the All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme. We concluded the delivery of the Primary Care Obesity Prevention programme, and a new cardiovascular disease prevention programme was also launched. We continued our work with our primary care partners to embed prevention in the health and care system. Our NHS Safeguarding Service continued its strategic role in coordinating and managing the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network.

Our Health Protection and Screening staff have had another exceptionally busy year. The winter of 2023/24 reminded us of the significant impact that outbreaks of infectious disease can have on individuals and communities, with our team

responding to the large number of whooping cough and the first outbreak of measles since the pandemic. Our Infection Services continued to provide testing across Wales, receiving and processing over 1.4m samples. Our Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme launched its vaccination communications campaign to strengthen messages about the importance of vaccination in preparation for the winter season. In addition, our Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) screening programme has now fully recovered from the pause implemented during the pandemic, and our Breast Screening and Diabetic Eye Screening programmes have made significant improvements toward recovery and are reducing the number of people waiting to be screened.

We have focused our efforts on refining our understanding of climate change surveillance needs while advancing our approach to research. We published our comprehensive Health Impact Assessment on Climate Change, highlighting key challenges and potential co-benefits specific to Wales. We continued our work to reduce our carbon footprint, including replacing our AAA screening fleet with hybrid and electric vehicles and enhancing our infrastructure to support active travel. We also introduced a new Climate Change Community of Practice, providing a dedicated space for colleagues to exchange insights and ideas.

Our enabling functions have continued to be pivotal to the successful delivery of our strategic priorities, playing a critical role in the leadership and delivery of a number of major areas of work, alongside the delivery of our full range of statutory functions and activities.

As we enter year two of our strategy, we will continue to demonstrate an unwavering focus on reducing health inequalities and ensuring that we are delivering maximum value and impact for the people of Wales and our partners. The actions that we have set out in our new Strategic Plan 2024-27 reflect our long term strategic ambitions and focus for how we will tackle the population health challenges facing Wales in the coming years.

We do not underestimate the challenges that we face. Our commitment is to meet these challenges head-on, to collaborate and work with our partners, demonstrate dynamism and agility, to learn, innovate and evolve. And most of all, to create an environment where we succeed through the commitment, professionalism, and efforts of our wonderful staff.