

## **Board Report of the Chief Executive**

**November 2021**

### **1 Developing a system-wide health protection response model for COVID and beyond**

On the 5 July, we introduced a revised operating model for our health protection response, by establishing a centralised COVID-19 response team with local teams engaging at a health board footprint.

Since then, the centralised 'COVID-AWARE' team has been merged with the existing 'AWARE' team to form a single health protection response function. Additional staff have been recruited as part of the expansion of the health protection response service, and they will add capacity to the team since the remainder of our mobilised staff returned to their substantive roles in October.

As part of the ongoing commitment to work closely with other key partners in the system-wide response, the health protection team has engaged with Directors of Public Health and Directors of Public Protection and their teams and Test Trace Protect teams, to agree how we continue to work together to respond to the pandemic. Engagement has taken place on health board geographies, which have helped define a local response that is effective, proportionate and consistent across Wales, where appropriate.

Our advice to the Welsh Government on the management of incidents and outbreaks in care homes has been taken into account in the latest announcement on policy and the guidance and system-wide standard operating protocol is being finalised and implemented.

Our response to COVID-19 is being integrated with our response to winter threats from infections, such as influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). This includes surveillance and reporting on respiratory viruses and managing incidents and outbreaks as they arise. We continue to remain vigilant on new variants of COVID-19 through genomic sequencing and surveillance.

Vaccination remains the most significant line of defence for COVID-19 and influenza and we continue to support the monitoring of uptake and implement campaigns to improve uptake and vaccination equity.

## **2 Meeting with Minister for Social Justice**

On the 16 November, the Chairperson and I met with Jane Hutt, the Minister for Social Justice, and her officials. This was a very constructive meeting that focused on providing an update to the Minister on the current work of Public Health Wales, the activities we are doing that support her Ministerial portfolio and violence prevention and the work of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) Support Hub. There are clearly considerable synergies with our work and the areas that the Minister is focusing on and we will maintain contact with her officials over the coming months.

The meeting was part of a series of meetings that the Chairperson and I have with Cabinet Ministers.

## **3 Meeting with Russell George MS, Chair of the Health and Social Care Senedd Committee**

On the 22 November, the Chairperson and I met with Russell George, MS, Chair of the Health and Social Care Senedd Committee. The areas that were discussed included providing an update on the work of Public Health Wales, population health challenges and how we can support the Committee in their work. The Chairperson and I can provide a verbal update on the meeting and the Board meeting.

## **4 Meeting with the Chief Executives of the four UK Public Health Agencies**

On the 5 October, I met with the other three Chief Executives of the UK Public Health agencies. These being Public Health Scotland, the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency and the UK Health Security Agency – which is the health protection agency for England. We discussed a broad range of areas including the COVID-19 context for each country, the workforce challenges and the broader population health harms. These are extremely helpful meetings which take place quarterly with additional bilateral engagement as appropriate.

## **5 Visits to our Teams Around Wales**

I have had the pleasure of visiting a number of our teams across Wales over the last few months, with further visits scheduled as part of returning to my drop in visits.

The recent visits have included seeing a wide range of our staff in Mold, Wrexham, Llandudno, Bangor and Rhyl on the 22 and 23 of September. These included checking in with members from our microbiology teams,

Breast Test Wales and Cervical Screening teams, local public health teams, health protection teams and our World Health Organization Collaborating Centre Team. I also visited our microbiology team in the University Hospital of Wales on the 12 October.

These visits are always extremely valuable and it is just wonderful to see the amazing work that our teams do across Wales every day – covering the breadth of public health.

## **6 External Events and Presentations**

Although I do not report on this in every Chief Executive report, I thought it would be helpful to provide an example of the types of events/conferences/summits that I am asked to speak/present at. Since the last Board meeting these have included:

- Welsh Government's *Net Zero Launch* on the 28 November
- *Innovation for Early Detection and Diagnosis of Cancer Summit* on the 17 November
- *National Social Care Conference: Public Health Agenda and Public Protection Opportunities* on the 18 November.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to **receive** this information.

**Tracey Cooper**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**