

Annual Report 2022/23



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Public Health
Wales

Section 1: Performance Report



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Foreword

Jan Williams OBE, Chair of the Board

2022/23 saw Public Health Wales reactivate all functions and services, integrating the ongoing COVID-19 response into business as usual, whilst setting about service recovery and transformation and laying foundations for the future. The Minister for Health and Social Services approved the 2022/25 Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) and Public Health Wales' dedicated and talented staff delivered 93.5% of the in-year actions. This was a remarkable achievement and sat alongside a significant refresh of the Long-Term Strategy 2023 – 35, and the launch of key national resources, including the Behavioural Sciences Unit, Improvement Cymru's Safe Care Collaborative and the Public Health Rapid Overview Dashboard.



All Directorates made a major contribution, both to the delivery of internal organisational plans and in supporting Public Health Wales' role as the National Public Health Organisation for Wales. This contribution ranged from the recovery and transformation of screening services, the provision of expert health protection, surveillance, environmental health, pathogen genomics and infection services; it included providing advice and guidance on subjects as diverse as the impact of the cost-of-living crisis to that of extreme weather conditions, from fair work to mental well-being self impact assessment.

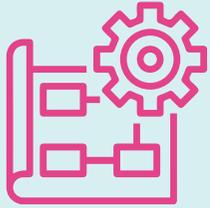
COVID-19 has exacerbated underlying population health and well-being challenges and 2022/23 saw Public Health Wales discharge an effective system leadership role, including through the work of the ACE Support Hub, the Health and Sustainability Hub, the Wider Determinants of Health Unit, the Healthy Working Wales' team, the Vaccination Disease Prevention Programme and the Primary Care Team.

The Policy and International Health Directorate celebrated its redesignation as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being, majoring on the development of a Well-being Economy in Wales. The Directorate's breadth of work included the production of a Social Value Database and Simulator for Public Health and, through the ACE Support Hub,

in partnership with Traumatic Stress Wales, the launch of the Trauma Practice Framework to develop a whole-of-society approach to implementing trauma-informed practice.

2022/23 also saw Public Health Wales' ambitious strategy for research, evaluation, data, digital and data science. Work began on modernising digital services, increasing data and digital capability, producing new data sets; analysis and research to support decision-making across Wales included a new set of projections for the prevalence of disease over the next 10 years. Work also included a well-received landscape review of artificial intelligence in health and care in Wales.

Corporate functions ensured robust governance, creative use of facilities- including enabling the first 'High Street' footprint for screening services in Mountain Ash, strong people and organisational development support, and rigorous financial management. Specific thanks go again to Huw George and the Finance Team for their oversight of delivery against all financial targets.



The Board focussed on its role in setting tone and culture, overseeing strategic risks against a clear strategic risk appetite, setting strategic direction, nurturing strategic partnerships and maintaining good governance

The Board focussed on its role in setting tone and culture, overseeing strategic risks against a clear strategic risk appetite, setting strategic direction, nurturing strategic partnerships and maintaining good governance. I am indebted to all my Board colleagues for their support and guidance; it continues to be my great privilege to work alongside them all. Kate Eden, Vice-Chair and Dyfed Edwards, Chair of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, were sources of wise counsel throughout the year and I thank them both. At the end of February 2023, Dyfed left us for a year, to assume the role of interim Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. I am most grateful to Kate Eden for her agreement to remain on the Board for 2023/24 in his absence.

Public Health Wales' exceptional year of achievement in 2022/23 owed much to Tracey Cooper's inspirational and visionary leadership. On behalf of the Non-Executive Directors, I congratulate her and the Executive Team on an outstanding year, against a challenging operating environment. I hope that they take great pride in the achievements set out in this Annual Report.

It continues to be my great honour to chair the Board of Public Health Wales and I look forward to commenting on further organisational success in 2023/24.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Williams".

Jan Williams OBE
Chair of the Board
Public Health Wales

Foreword

Tracey Cooper, Chief Executive

It is my pleasure to introduce our Annual Report for 2022/23.

As the National Public Health Organisation for Wales, our vision is *'Working to achieve a healthier future for Wales'*.

Over the last three years, we have mounted an unprecedented response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This has been part of a system-wide effort to respond effectively to the challenges we have faced as the pandemic has evolved. This year is the first full year of us reactivating the breadth of our public health functions in order to not only protect the public from infectious diseases and environmental harms, but also increase our focus on tackling the broader population health challenges to create a healthy and sustainable Wales.



We have faced significant population health challenges over the last few years including the Coronavirus pandemic, the cost of living crisis and the effects of climate change, and we continue to tackle these today and into the future. As a result, during 2022/23 we worked with our people across the organisation, our partners and the public and reviewed the state of health in Wales, in order to develop our new long term strategy, '*Working Together for a Healthier Wales*' which takes us to 2035. It sets out our long term strategic ambitions for how we will tackle the population health challenges facing Wales in the coming years and what our focus will be in creating a healthier Wales.

The continued pace of work through this year, against a backdrop of an exceptionally busy 2021/22, has also meant that the well-being, welfare and resilience of our staff remains a key focus. This continues to be a significant priority for us, together with increasing our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion and the implementation of our '*Work How It Works Best*' approach which we co-designed with our people in 2021/22 to determine our ways of working as an organisation going forward.

Our workforce is at the heart of our ability to deliver our aims and to protect and improve the public's health. Once again, our exceptionally dedicated people have gone above and beyond, working in collaboration with one another and with our partners across Wales to deliver yet another extraordinary year of protecting and supporting the health and well-being of the people of Wales.

I am so very proud to share with you the exceptional work that all of our people have done right across the organisation to support Wales at such a challenging time.

Within this Annual Report, we outline the many extraordinary achievements and a wide range of delivery activities by our people throughout the year. This represents just a sample of the excellent work undertaken across the organisation. We have had a lot of highlights throughout the year across the wide range of our functions, and it is difficult to do them all justice in an introduction, so I have given a flavour of some of the highlights below.

2022/23 was the first full year of reactivation of all of our public health functions. Consequently, we developed our Strategic Plan for 2022/23 in response to these challenges, to support Wales as we gradually move from pandemic to endemic, as set out in the Welsh Government strategy, '*Together for a Safer Future*'.



Our Infection Service supported NHS Wales by processing over 1.6m samples including 85,000 blood cultures, 385,000 urine samples and 380,000 respiratory samples in our microbiology laboratories

Our response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been integrated into business as usual, moving from a COVID-19 focussed response to an Acute Respiratory Infection Management Team, enabling the work to protect against the threat from COVID-19 to be alongside other infectious disease threats, such as influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus.

Our Infection Service supported NHS Wales by processing over 1.6m samples including 85,000 blood cultures, 385,000 urine samples and 380,000 respiratory samples in our microbiology laboratories. Increased requirements in areas such as antimicrobial susceptibility mean that each sample undergoes multiple steps, with some going to our national/specialist reference laboratories for specialist testing. Our genomics service, supported by specialist laboratories, are world-leading in terms of both the type of data generated, and the speed with which it is produced and used.

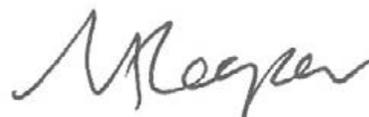
Recovery plans for our Wales Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening, Diabetic Eye Screening Wales and Breast Test Wales have continued with additional recovery funding provided by the Welsh Government. These programmes have achieved pre COVID-19 levels of activity (and above) to support the recovery of the programmes. Increased activity in both Breast Test Wales and Diabetic Eye Screening Wales has resulted in a reduction in the backlogs for our participants in line with expectations.

We have also increased our focus on our evidence based understanding and advising on the medium and longer term population health impacts of COVID-19, and developed advice on taking a public health approach to the cost of living crisis – both of which have become even more significant for us and for the people of Wales.

In addition, we achieved the re-designation of our World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being for a further four years and reactivated our health improvement programmes including the launch of the All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme. We also established a national Safe Care Partnership with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement to support the NHS in driving improvements in patient safety.

Our Corporate and enabling functions are pivotal to the successful delivery of our public health priorities and in supporting wider organisational recovery. They have played a critical role in the leadership and delivery of a number of major areas of work including maximising our digital, data and evidence skills and approaches across the organisation, our ongoing focus on the health, well-being and welfare of our staff, our continued focus on sustainability and climate change and driving improvements in the quality and impact of our services and functions.

Finally, I would like to personally thank each and every one of our extraordinary people across Public Health Wales, our Executive Team, Jan Williams our chair, and our Non-Executive Directors, for their hard work, passion and unrelenting commitment to the people of Wales.



Dr Tracey Cooper
Chief Executive
Public Health Wales

1. Introduction

Since early 2020, Public Health Wales has mounted an unprecedented response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This was part of a system-wide effort to respond effectively to the challenges we have faced as the pandemic has evolved. Throughout this, we have prioritised the need to deliver an effective health protection and microbiology response, while utilising our expertise in relation to behavioural insights and change, evidence and research, prevention, and national/international horizon scanning. In addition, we continued to deliver our maternal and neonatal screening programmes throughout the pandemic.

We also recognised, from an early stage, the impact of the broader and longer-term implications for the people of Wales. The evidence shows us that the pandemic has exacerbated existing health inequalities and disproportionately negatively impacted upon our most deprived communities. We also know that the impact on the wider health and social care system has been dramatic and will require an equally effective response to address this over the coming years.



Within the strategic context set by ‘A Healthier Future’, and the specific Ministerial Priorities, we set out the tangible and measurable actions to be undertaken through the delivery of a small number of strategic themes for 2022/23

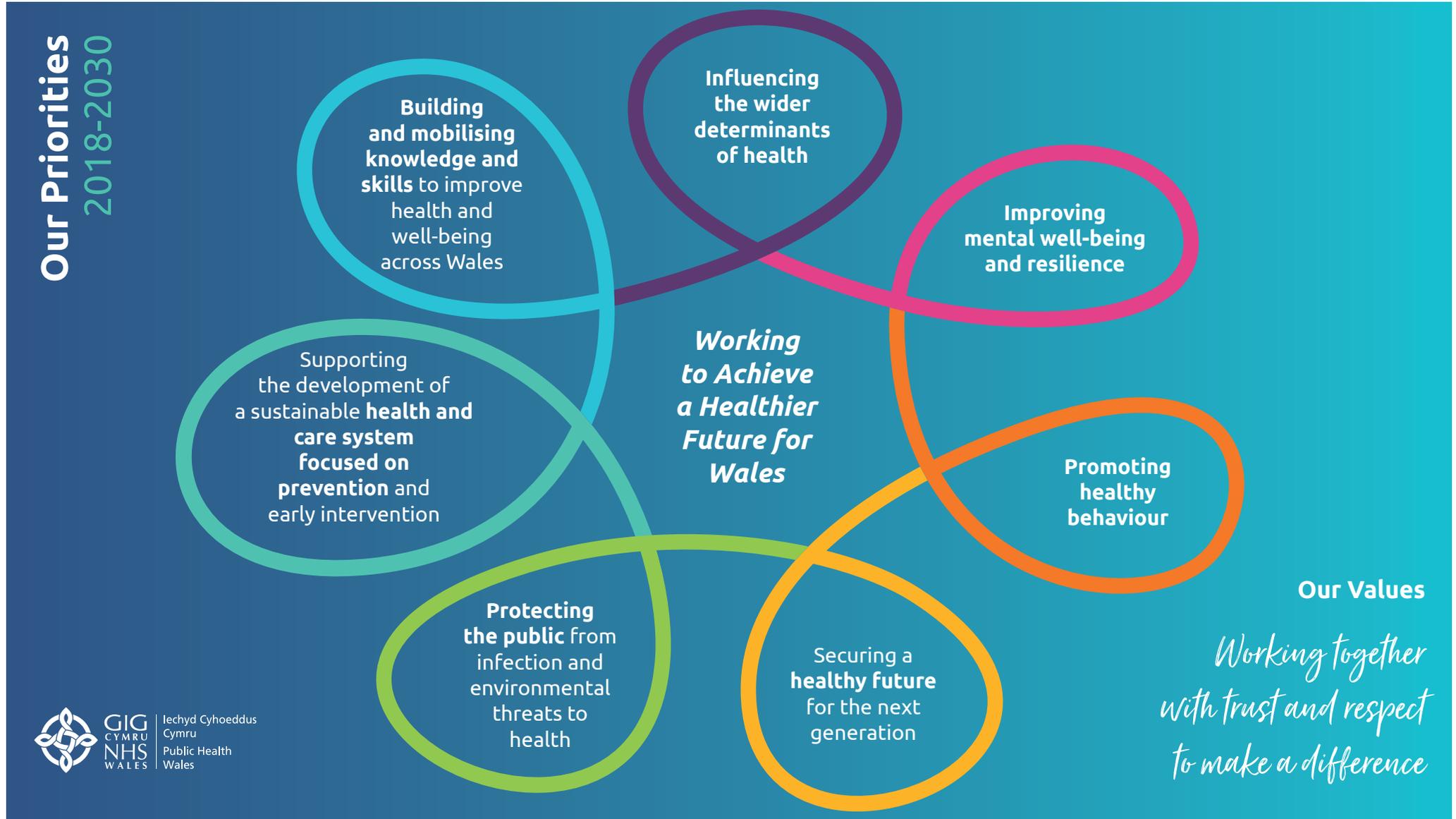
2022/23 was the first full year of the reactivation of all of our public health functions and, consequently, we developed our Strategic Plan for 2022/23 in response to these challenges to support Wales as we gradually moved from pandemic to endemic, as set out in the Welsh Government strategy, ‘Together for a Safer Future’. As the National Public Health Institute for Wales, we provide data and science-based leadership, expertise, coordination, advice and delivery of key public health services. We have considered our role in the key public health elements of ‘Together for a Safer Future’, particularly around our key system-leadership, policy advice, evidence provision and service delivery attributes, in order to support its successful implementation. This included the key elements of communicable disease control, particularly around surveillance, diagnostics, prevention and control. In addition, it has shaped our work around tackling the burden of disease and the broader population harms, including socio-economic harms.

Also in 2022/23, the accelerated cost of living crisis evolved in Wales and, as a result, we actively responded in undertaking work across the organisation to support the public, partners and the Welsh Government as we mobilised to tackle the implications of the crisis.

We recognised the way to successfully deliver our Plan and address the public health challenges is through strong partnership working with key sectors including local government, third sector, the NHS and through regional boards. This continues to be essential as we collectively work to address issues related to health inequalities.

While the challenges that we face in the coming years are stark, including from issues such as climate change, we have seen the power and impact when we mobilise the collective efforts towards a system response. Within the strategic context set by ‘A Healthier Future’, and the specific Ministerial Priorities, we set out the tangible and measurable actions to be undertaken through the delivery of a small number of strategic themes for 2022/23.

This was guided by our Long Term Strategy, 'Working to Achieve a Healthier Future for Wales', and seven strategic priorities, as can be seen below:





Prioritising additional population health actions, including to mitigate the effects of climate change, inform sustainable investment as we move towards an economy of well-being

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant adverse effects – both direct and indirect – on population health and well-being. We have therefore focused on enabling better population health and reducing health inequalities through preventative and sustainable measures. This includes influencing the wider determinants of health, improving mental well-being and resilience, promoting healthy behaviours, and securing a healthy future for the next generation. In addition, recent years have demonstrated the need to prioritise additional population health actions, including to mitigate the effects of climate change, inform sustainable investment as we move towards an economy of well-being, strengthen Wales' role as an influencer nation, and support primary care transformation and embed prevention.

A key priority continues to be to protect the public from infection and environmental threats. In 2022/23, we have done this by focusing on the delivery of excellent services for population health screening programmes, health protection and infection. Key aspects of this work includes further developing our diagnostic and treatment capabilities, including pathogen genomics, providing system-leadership on a range of areas, such as healthcare associated infections, anti-microbial resistance and vaccine preventable diseases, and managing and minimising the risks from environmental hazards. In addition, the key focus of our screening programmes has been the ongoing delivery of our reactivation plans, addressing the backlogs accrued as a result of the pausing of a number of the programmes, working closely with Health Boards to address challenges in access to the commissioned elements of the screening pathways and the work to address inequalities in uptake.

We have continued to support the wider system, in light of the challenges faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing focus on quality in Wales, particularly through the work of Improvement Cymru. This is intended to support improvements in the quality and safety of health and care services in Wales. We have focused on supporting the transformation of national safety outcomes, helped to strengthen the wider system's improvement capability, actively contributed to the UK and international improvement community, and delivered impactful improvements.

We have undertaken a range of activities, reflected across the actions set out in our Strategic Plan, to help build and mobilise knowledge and skills to improve health and well-being across Wales. We have focused on maximising the use of digital, data and evidence to improve public health. This included prioritising our evidence and analysis on what works – and communicating it with impact, embedding inclusion into our digital, data and evaluation, and using emerging technologies and data science.



To support the delivery of our Plan, we have undertaken enabling activity around three key themes, focused on delivering value, improving performance and delivery, developing our organisation to be a great place to work, and creating the conditions to be an organisation that is continuously improving and learning.

2. Our Strategic Plan

A number of key drivers informed the specific focus of our Strategic Plan for 2022/23, including our ongoing response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, tackling the burden of disease, the broader population harms, the accelerating cost of living crisis, our need to focus on the recovery and transformation of our key public health services and functions, and developments in our approaches and ways of working, particularly around digital transformation and data science. This Plan was very much a one-year transition Plan while we progressed the engagement for, and development of, a new Long Term Strategy to commence from April 2023 and to take us to 2035.

These drivers informed the identification of a small number of strategic themes that we focused on during 2022/23 in delivering the current strategic priorities:



Enabling better population health and reducing health inequalities through preventative and sustainable measures



Delivering excellent services for population screening programmes, health protection and infection



Supporting improvements in the quality and safety of health and care services

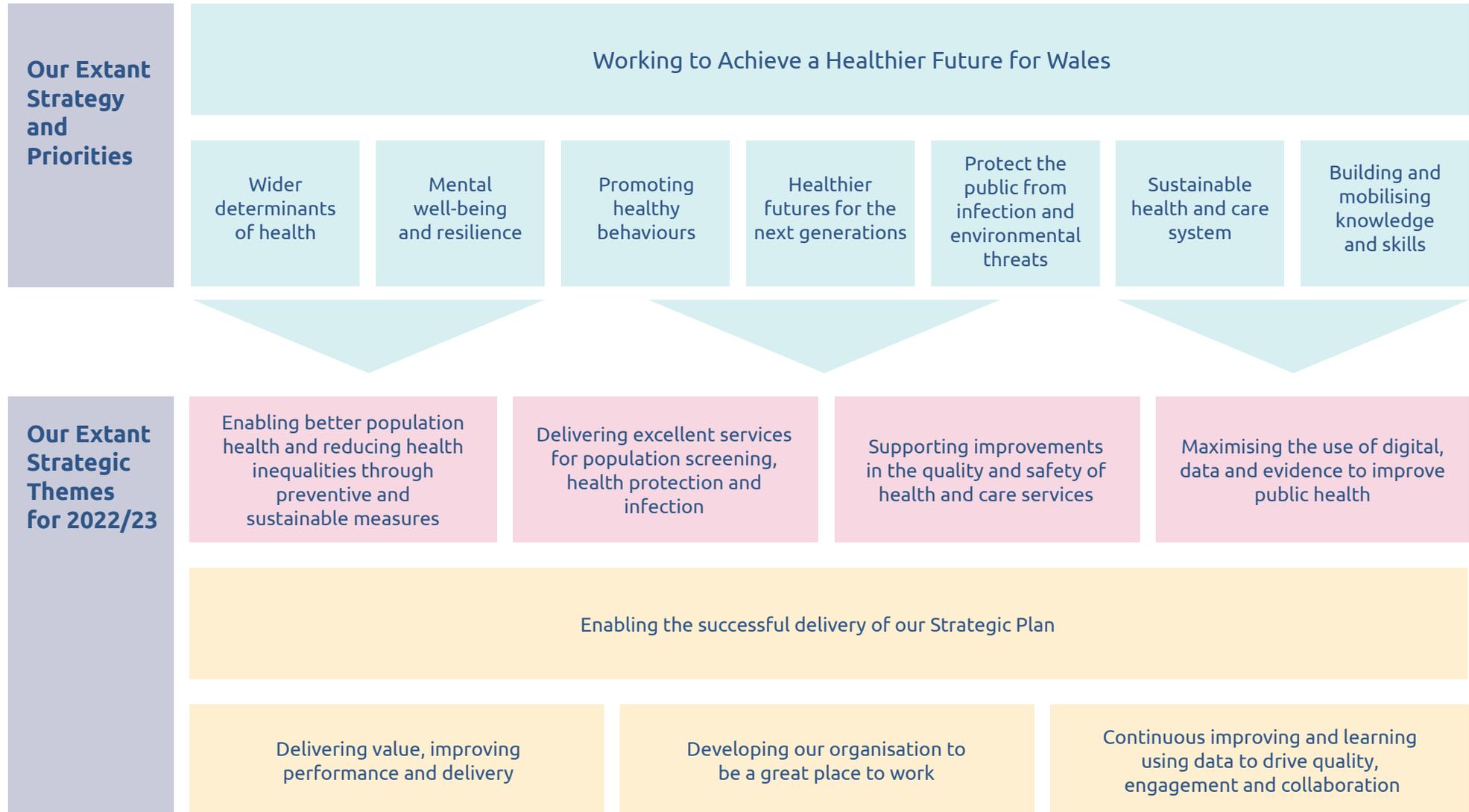


Maximising the use of digital, data and evidence to improve public health



Enabling the successful delivery of our Plan

Our 'Plan on a page' below provides a visual summary of our strategic priorities and strategic themes for 2022/23





Our progress in delivering our milestones throughout 2022/23 is a great achievement for the organisation and reflects the continued tremendous work of our staff in very challenging times across NHS Wales

2.1 Progress Against Delivering Our Plan

The end of March 2023 saw the conclusion of our Strategic Plan 2022/23 and we ended the year with over 93% of our delivery milestones complete, equating to 318 milestones delivered from a total of 340 milestones. This compares to 86% of milestones completed in 2021/22.

Less than 7% of milestones were reported as incomplete in 2022/23. Delays in delivery were due to factors outside of our control including dependencies on activities by other organisations, and staffing issues due to sickness absence. During the last 12 months, 82 milestone requests for change to delivery dates were approved, with an average extension requested of 169 days.

Any agreed milestones that were unable to be delivered will roll-over into our 2023/24 Plan, of which 47% will be delivered in Quarter 1, 28% in Quarter 2, 6% in Quarter 3, and 19% in Quarter 4.

Our progress in delivering our milestones throughout 2022/23 is a great achievement for the organisation and reflects the continued tremendous work of our staff in very challenging times across NHS Wales. Further information on our key themes and examples of what we delivered in 2022/23, alongside key challenges and opportunities for learning, are set out in the following section.

3. Strategic Theme 1: Enabling Better Population Health and Reducing Health Inequalities Through Preventative and Sustainable Measures

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing population health and well-being challenges across Wales in relation to healthy life expectancy and health inequalities, both directly and indirectly, with our most deprived communities impacted considerably more than our least deprived communities. The pandemic has also added to a pre-existing backlog of care in the NHS, highlighting the need to build capacity to shift the NHS to a 'wellness system' based on prevention and early intervention, as envisioned in A Healthier Wales.

However, we also need to acknowledge that the pandemic has significantly interrupted our work towards this goal. The pandemic, together with the adaptive challenges posed by leaving the European Union and climate change, as well as emerging challenges such as the cost of living crisis, continue to highlight the profound interdependencies between population health and societal, economic and environmental well-being.



3.1 Wider Determinants of Health and Health Equity

In order to understand our population, we published a report on the [Trends in health and well-being during the Coronavirus pandemic](#).

This was a summary report based on data from the 'How are We Doing in Wales?' public engagement survey on health and well-being during Coronavirus measures.

The report summarised key trends from survey data collected from approximately 27,000 Wales residents over the two-year period until March 2022. The report presented trends in a range of areas and examined differences in responses by deprivation, gender and age.

Under the auspices of the Building a Healthier Wales Partnership, we hosted a national Cost of Living Summit involving 180 leaders and public advocates to identify good practice, challenges and solutions to inform national and local responses. We have also advised the Minister for Health and Social Services and policy leads directly on how health inequalities can be addressed through implementing universal free primary school meals and the early years and childcare offer. This accompanied the publication of [Cost of Living: A public health issue](#) by the Polisi Team.



Public Health Network Cymru (PHNC) continues to increase its membership and reach, having delivered 17 digital on-line events to share learning on policy, research and practice

We published a report "[Cold homes and their association with health and well-being: a systematic literature review](#)" in order to provide evidence on the appropriateness of Welsh Government's definition of a satisfactory heating regime for health and well-being in Wales, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising cost of living and other important contextual factors including fuel poverty.

The Violence Prevention strategy was launched by the Wales Violence Prevention Unit to take forward a strategic approach at an all-Wales level to embed and sustain the key principles of Violence Prevention, a system wide approach to preventing, mitigating and responding to violence using a public health approach. The framework lays the groundwork for multi-agency action, supporting partners in Wales to make sure valuable time, money and resources are spent on implementing strategies and activities that prevent violence among children and young people.

The Wider Determinants of Health Unit published a guide and a suite of products for local agencies to inform and advocate for action to improve participation in [fair work](#) to develop health, well-being and equity, which have now been incorporated within Public Services Board Well-being plans (2023-28).

[Public Health Network Cymru](#) (PHNC) continues to increase its membership and reach, having delivered 17 digital on-line events to share learning on policy, research and practice, covering topics such as climate change, planning for a healthier future and systems thinking.

3.2 Mental Well-being and Resilience

A [Mental Well-being Impact Assessment](#) (MWIA) of COVID-19 on children and young people was published in July 2022, followed by a Virtual masterclass on MWIA in September 2022. The report aims to provide evidence and learning to inform cross-sector policy and practice directed at pandemic recovery, future emergencies and improving population mental well-being for the long term.

To help Local Authorities and schools make informed decisions when choosing interventions to improve and promote mental well-being in schools, we rolled-out our "[What Works Toolkit](#)". We have examined the best available evidence for interventions to find out if they are effective in improving mental and emotional well-being outcomes in learners or staff, when delivered in a school setting.

We have published a [Conceptual Framework for Mental Well-being](#) to explain the relationship between individual and community well-being and key elements that influence well-being at each level, and build a common cross-sector understanding of mental well-being in Wales and the factors that influence it.

Healthy Behaviours

Our [Behavioural Science Unit](#) (BeSci Unit) was launched in May 2022 chaired by Jan Williams, our Chair, with contributions from Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer, Prof Jim McManus, President of the UK Association of Directors of Public Health, and Professor Robert West, University College London). The BeSci Unit provides specialist expertise on behavioural science and enabled the increasingly routine application of it to improve health and well-being in Wales. Since the launch of the BeSci Unit, it has produced a series of guides, carried out research and launched the Wales Behavioural Science Community of Practice.

The [Tobacco Control Programme](#) has completed a literature review and a public survey on further restricting smoking in outdoor areas, which confirmed there is increasing public support for this within Wales, and internationally, particularly in areas frequented by children and young people. A Help Me Quit in Hospital Programme has also been successfully implemented to maximise the potential of a secondary care referral or contact to motivate a quit attempt and direct smokers to support.

Our *Physical Activity Programme* launched the first all-Wales Travel to School Hands Up Survey, which asks primary school children how they usually travel to school. Over 30,000 children took part in the annual survey, which will inform policy and planning at all levels. The Programme has shaped the development of the national Daily Active Whole School Approach, which aims to improve opportunities for physical activity in and around the school day.

We led on two key pieces of work; a mapping exercise and insight work with teachers that identified barriers and facilitators to delivering a whole school approach to physical activity.

Our Social Marketing Programme has led the development and implementation of two key packages, including Feel the Difference (for Help Me Quit) and Healthy Weight Healthy You (for Healthy Weight Healthy Wales).

Our *Healthy Working Wales* (HWW) team has:

- Produced a briefing paper on the significance of ill-health in driving economic inactivity in Wales. As well as setting out policy and practical implications, the paper highlights the contribution of Healthy Working Wales and the Employee Health Management Programmes in preventing people from falling out of work due to ill health through supportive employer practices and improved management of sickness absence.

- Produced two further HWW podcasts focusing on financial well-being and Planetary Health: Employer Action on Environmental Sustainability. The podcasts are designed to provide employers with knowledge and support to help keep the Welsh workforce healthy and in work. The Welsh Language Commissioner's office highlighted podcasts as examples of good practice in relation to Welsh language standards.
- Launched new HWW web pages for employers on mental health and well-being, the cost-of-living crisis, and musculoskeletal conditions (MSKs), capturing the most up to date information and evidence, including suggestions for employer action, resources and guidance documents from trusted sources, and links to services providing further support.

Significant progress has been made to review all aspects of the [National Exercise Referral Scheme](#) in order to improve quality, ensure consistent delivery of the programme and measure programme outputs and outcomes more effectively. National operational oversight and management of NERS also transferred to Public Health Wales from the WLGA which led to the creation of a new, in-house team and establishment of effective communication channels with all 22 local NERS programmes. In addition, we procured development of a new Health Improvement Patient Administration System for both NERS and Help Me Quit.

The [Nutrition and Obesity Team](#) reviewed national nutritional guidance and policy relating to school meals in Wales, which highlighted that they were no longer in line with current nutritional recommendations, particularly in relation to sugar. The work also highlighted the opportunities to align guidance and standards with wider policy objectives such as carbon reduction and removal of ultra-processed foods. The work is helping to inform a Welsh Government led review of school meals standards.

The [Education and Health programme](#) has continued its work to review and refresh the Welsh Network of Health Promoting School Schemes to ensure that it remains relevant and supports the wider reform of the curriculum. The recommendations were presented and discussed at a roundtable event in October with representatives from across the Education and Health sector in Wales.

Early Years

The [Ace Support Hub](#) led on the implementation of our [Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences \(TrACE\) toolkit](#) which was developed to support organisations to embed ACE Awareness and Trauma-Informed Practice. The Hub also launched the [National Trauma Practice Framework for Wales 'Trauma-Informed Wales: A Societal Approach to Understanding, Preventing and Supporting the Impacts of Trauma and Adversity'](#).

The [First 1000 Days programme](#) published a [Public Health Approach to Supporting Parents](#), based on the structural and psychosocial factors that influence effective parenting and determine outcomes for our youngest children. The programme has also collaborated with the FUSE Centre for Translational Research in Public Health on research to understand the [influence of socio-economic status on pregnancy outcomes](#), accompanied by a podcast and infographic.



The team also produced a **Social Value Database and Simulator for Public Health tool** which is part of a pioneering programme of work towards increasing value and impact

Health in All Policies

Working with the Office of the Future Generations Commissioner, the *Polisi team* used a participatory futures approach to understand what less heard from communities hope and fear for a future with climate change in Wales, with the findings shared as part of Welsh Government's Wales Climate Week 2022, which had over 900 attendees. A masterclass of the methodology was also held in Wrexham, and several other projects have adopted the approach, including Natural Resources Wales' Nature and Us Citizen's Assembly.

International Health

The *International Health team* produced two animations, showcasing innovative *Welsh Health Equity Status Report Initiative (WHESRI)* work, aiming to inform and support solutions to address health inequalities in Wales and beyond. The animations highlight Wales as being one of the first live innovation sites for health equity and investment for

health and well-being in the World Health Organization European Region.

To quantify the health gap in Wales and to provide a better understanding of its main drivers, the International Health Team published [Influencing the Health Gap in Wales: Decomposition analysis discussion paper](#), applying an innovative World Health Organization methodology.

The team also produced a [Social Value Database and Simulator for Public Health tool](#) which is part of a pioneering programme of work towards increasing value and impact, aiming to inform sustainable evidence- and Value-Based decision-making and investment prioritisation across Public health Wales and NHS Wales.

The [International Health team also produced five International Horizon Scanning and Learning reports](#) on priority public health topics to inform policy and practice in Wales, including on the Cost of Living Crisis.



Prevention in Primary Care

We published a [Primary Care Obesity Prevention \(PCOP\) Action Plan 2022-24](#), which includes the establishment of an obesity prevention peer network, research on understanding the effectiveness of non-specialist interventions for weight management up to 5-years after birth; and support for implementing the All Wales Weight Management Pathway (AWWMP) including the development of a minimum data set.

Following our input into contract negotiations, the GMS contract agreement 2022-23 includes a [quality Improvement project focused on specific unhealthy behaviours](#) in newly registered patients as well as patients with certain long-term or chronic conditions.

The QI project will include supporting identification of patients aged 16 and over who have a high BMI, signposting/referring patients who are identified as at risk to relevant support and ensuring HbA1C measurements are taken and referrals made into the All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme where appropriate.

Led by the Primary Care Division, the [All Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme \(AWDPP\)](#) formally launched in June 2022 during 'Diabetes Awareness Week' by the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Well-being. Within the first 9 months of implementing the AWDPP, 12 out of 14 primary care clusters receiving Welsh Government funding have commenced delivery of the programme, with 26 healthcare support workers and 7 dietetic leads recruited and actively delivering the AWDPP across Wales. Our central team has played a key role in supporting the programme nationally, including publishing an AWDPP Intervention Protocol, developing a compendium of resources and providing ongoing programme management and support to Health Boards.

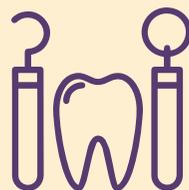
In relation to social prescribing, we published a [Social Prescribing Interfaces](#) report to inform strategic direction and policy development on social prescribing. We also contributed to the [National Review of Primary Care Mental Health Demand & Activity](#), supported development of a 'core capabilities framework' led by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), and participated in the EurohealthNet Social Prescribing Country Exchange.

We developed a [Primary Care Model for Wales \(PCMW\) / Accelerated Cluster Development \(ACD\) monitoring and evaluation plan](#) supported by a Cluster Development Framework (CDF). A Cluster peer review process has been designed, and pilot reviews implemented in each Health Board / Regional Partnership Board.

Proposals have been made to the Strategic Programme for Primary Care for a self-reflection tool and key indicator dashboard to further support and monitor implementation progress during post-transition year.

We have continued to support the [Strategic Programme for Primary Care](#) in relation to Accelerated Cluster Development (ACD), including supporting an Optometry Professional Collaborative pilot in Cwm Taf and producing a [Learning and development opportunities for new and existing cluster leads discussion paper](#) to inform a leadership programme being provided by HEIW from Spring 2023. In addition, we produced an [ACD Toolkit](#), developed a [Cluster Planning Support Portal](#) and enhanced the Primary Care One website.

We have continued to provide general public health advice on optometry and have inputted into the strategic development of primary care eye health care services, including specialist advice to the Optometry Contract Reform Implementation Board and relevant sub-groups. We have also provided advice and guidance to a Health Education and Improvement Wales Optometric Fellow producing an All Wales Eye Health Needs Assessment.



In support of oral health improvement, the national oral health improvement programme for children continued to work towards regaining coverage that was suspended during the pandemic

In support of oral health improvement, *Designed to Smile*, the national oral health improvement programme for children (www.designedtosmile.org) continued to work towards regaining coverage that was suspended during the pandemic.

The Dental Public Health team is responsible for the design, conduct and delivery of the Dental Epidemiology Programme for Wales, working alongside the Welsh Oral Health Information Unit (WOHIU) within the Cardiff University School of Dentistry and Community Dental Services (CDSs) in Health Boards. We are currently supporting national dental examination and data collection from Year 1 children. We also started planning for the dental health survey of Year 7 children in Wales.

The team also continues to provide specialist input and programme management support to the General Dental Services Reform Programme, including through an overarching Dental Strategic Oversight Group. We also provided independent advice and support to Welsh Government, Health Boards, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and others. We also reviewed, improved and co-ordinated a once for Wales annual Quality Assurance self-assessment process, achieving a 99.7% response rate from NHS dental practices submitting their self-assessments to their Health Boards.

Highlighting Excellence and Innovative Practice

Wider Determinants of Health and Health Equity

The Wider Determinants of Health Unit successfully secured a Health Foundation design award, in collaboration with Local Public Health Teams, which is funding an innovative approach to applying and learning from complex system approaches to support Public Services Boards across Wales. There is a strong appetite for applying systems approaches to themes identified in Well-being Plans and sharing learning across Wales and UK nations. We have designed an approach involving Applied Systems Learning Cohorts to support PSBs for submission to the Health Foundation. This aligns with Future Generations Office and Welsh Government work on strengthening PSBs use of the Well-Being of Future Generations five ways of working and further developing a culture of reflective practice.

We developed, piloted and evaluated Communities4Change (C4C) Wales as an evidence informed, time-limited approach which brings together individuals from multiple agencies with a common goal to enable and accelerate change to improve health and health equity. The first C4C has been undertaken with Cwm Taf Morgannwg Healthy Housing Partnership. Learning from this has demonstrated the potential of the approach as a catalyst to change, the importance of the nature of the problem and context, the need to focus on relationships from the outset, identify required capacity and exit planning.

Healthy Behaviours

The Behaviour Science Unit served as a focal point for World Health Organization Europe's Behavioural and Cultural Insights flagship initiative activity – contributing to a guide on establishing Behavioural Science Units, featuring a case-study on Wales and a Resolution and Action Framework on using behavioural science for better health adopted across all 53 member states.

The development of 'Healthy Weight Healthy You' has adopted best practice approaches to the design of digital tools. The Nutrition and Obesity and Social Marketing Programme Teams have engaged users in the development of the tools, commissioning the development of personas which led to four unique user journeys which have formed the basis of the tool. The work has received very positive feedback in user testing with particularly positive responses from both professionals and the public on the approach to avoiding stigma and promoting a psychologically informed approach to supporting people living with overweight and obesity.

Early Years

The First 1000 Days and Public Information Programme teams have taken a best practice approach in engaging users in developing the replacement for Bump Baby and Beyond. Having a baby is a time when many parents seek information and support to help them in their transition to and through the early years of parenthood. Every Child 'Your Pregnancy and Birth' was finalised at the end of 2022/23. The response from user testing has been very positive with participants welcoming the informative, helpful and clear content which is inclusive of parents from a range of backgrounds including those from traditionally marginalised communities.

Health in All Policies

The Polisi Team published a report on the [Cost of living crisis in Wales: a public health lens](#), drawing upon expertise from across Public Health Wales. The report has helped inform Welsh Government's response and scrutiny by the Senedd, as well as the action of Health Boards and third sector organisations.



International Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being celebrated its re-designation with a high-level cross-sector webinar which was addressed by the Wales' Minister for Health and Social Services and Head of the WHO European Office for Investment for Health and Development. The International Health team co-organised and took an active part in the first WHO high level forum on 'Health in the Well-being Economy' in Copenhagen, 2023; and is supporting the Welsh Government to build a Well-being Economy in Wales and the European Region.

Prevention in Primary Care

Designed and led by the Primary Care Division, Public Health Wales, the Greener Primary Care Framework and Award Scheme was launched nationally in June 2022 with the [support](#) of the Minister for Health and Social Services, Minister for Climate Change and the Future Generations Commissioner. The first year saw over 100 practices, across all four contractor settings and all health board areas in Wales complete approximately 650 climate change actions with 16 bronze, 11 silver and 8 gold awards given. The relaunch of year 2 was marked with a webinar on 20 March 2023 which was endorsed for the second year with a [Ministerial written statement](#). An [animation](#) designed and developed to promote the Scheme was developed and a [Yearbook](#) of case studies from year 1 published with funding from the Welsh Government Health and Social Care Climate Emergency National Programme. Successful completion of the 2022-2023 [Bevan Exemplar Programme](#) where the Scheme was commended at the [Bevan Showcase event](#) in January 2023.

The [Ex Service / Veterans Health – Guidance for General Practices](#), 2022 provides detail of the duty on all general practices in Wales to provide care, signpost to and/or refer to relevant services where appropriate any veteran or veteran family member registered with the practice.

Key Challenges and Risks

We need to build sustainable organisational capability and the associated systems and processes in order to routinely deploy behavioural science, to optimise our policies, services and communications, to ultimately improve and protect health and well-being. In addition, there are capacity limitations in the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU), team to prepare for and support the Welsh Government and public bodies for the Health Impact Assessment statutory regulations which will come on stream in 2023/24.

There is pressure across the system as a result of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis which has had an impact on the ability of our partners to engage in system wide initiatives. System capacity to act on population health is likely to remain a challenge in the coming years. The impact of wider determinants on the health of the people of Wales is an organisational priority; however, our capacity to respond to these evolving challenges remains limited, while other parts of the system that we seek to engage, e.g. local authorities, are facing major financial and operational challenges.

Learning and Areas for Improvement

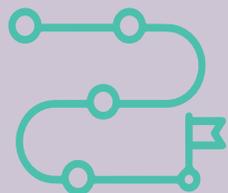
The '*How are We Doing in Wales?*' public engagement summary report presented trends data that were weighted to national population demographics by deprivation, gender and age. The learning from the public engagement survey has informed the development and piloting in 2022-2023 of the cross-organisational '*Time to Talk Public Health*' population panel survey.

Our report '*Cost of living crisis in Wales: A public health lens*' demonstrated our ability to rapidly draw together expertise across the organisation and produce well evidenced, actionable insight on an ongoing crisis in a format relevant to policymakers.

The development of public facing information and behaviour change tools during the year highlighted the critical importance of user voice and needs as a focus for development and the importance of balancing this with the needs and wants of professionals.

4. Strategic Theme 2: Delivering Excellent Services for Population Screening Programmes, Health Protection and Infection

Protecting the public from the effects of infections and exposure to environmental problems, such as air pollution, and the delivery of our national screening programmes are core responsibilities for Public Health Wales. Our Category 1 responder status (as part of the Civil Contingences Act) demonstrates our role in protecting the public and working with our partners to mitigate risks to human health. We work to protect the health of the people of Wales through the delivery of a number of health protection and infection control services, and national screening programmes.



We developed a transition plan to prepare for a move from pandemic to endemic response, setting out the direction of travel for: Diagnostics and Treatment; Surveillance and Evidence; and Prevention and Control

4.1 COVID-19 Response

During 2022/23, our response to COVID-19 has been integrated into business as usual, moving from a COVID-focussed response to an Acute Respiratory Infection Management Team. This has enabled the work to protect against the threat from COVID-19 alongside other infectious disease threats, such as influenza and Respiratory Syncytial Virus.

We developed a transition plan to prepare for a move from pandemic to endemic response, setting out the direction of travel for: Diagnostics and Treatment; Surveillance and Evidence; and Prevention and Control. Although COVID-19 has not settled to an endemic phase, where the rate of infection and its impact can be predicted and are at low and acceptable levels, we are planning the transition to an endemic state by phasing in integrated and business as usual ways of working, particularly around testing and surveillance.

We were commissioned by the Welsh Government to develop an integrated respiratory surveillance system for Wales. Following submission of a business case, funding was provided to implement a sentinel surveillance service in primary care, pharmacy and care homes, and for testing and pathogen genomics.

We continued to advise the Welsh Government on policy decisions for COVID-19, including the sharing of five advice notes with the Chief Medical Officer, including advice the COVID-19 testing strategy for the Spring/Summer of 2023, which was implemented on 1 April 2023.

4.2 Infection Service

The Infection Service provides clinical and diagnostics services across Wales. It operates 13 laboratories including five hot labs and has an establishment of nearly 700 posts. We collaborate with multiple partners to provide clinical and population infection services including Health Protection, Health Boards and the Welsh Government. We are a multi-professional workforce including healthcare scientists, biomedical support workers, and medical and nursing staff.

The Infection Service provides a range of diagnostics covering bacteriology, mycology and virology. It includes several national and specialist reference laboratories including the UK Anaerobe Reference Unit and the Pathogen Genomics Unit.

During 2022/23, the Infection Service supported NHS Wales by processing over 1.6m samples including 85,000 blood cultures, 385,000 urine samples and 380,000 respiratory samples. Increased requirements in areas such as antimicrobial susceptibility mean that each sample undergoes multiple steps, with some going to our national/specialist reference laboratories for specialist testing.

The Infection Service also underwent a full surveillance visit by UKAS in the latter part of 2022/23. While based on visits and reviews across a few weeks, it requires preparation and implementation of robust quality systems and practices as an ongoing requirement. Full accreditation was maintained.

We continue to focus on training and education to ensure a competent and confident workforce. Given the professional requirements across our roles, this is a significant challenge on available resources, with over 200 staff (roughly 1/3 of our workforce) undergoing formal training including top-up modules, certification of competency and specialist portfolios. This is absolutely fundamental to the long-term sustainability of the service, recruitment, retention and ensuring we are able to deliver the service required of us.

Recovery across the NHS system has seen a general increase in our workload, and while COVID-19 and respiratory testing continued to attract significant attention, the service has had to respond to a number of other public health challenges including Monkey Pox (Mpox), supporting the safe arrivals of refugees from the Ukraine conflict, and the increase in Strep A infections during the winter season.



The genomics services, supported by specialist laboratories are world-leading in terms of both the type of data generated, and the speed with which it is produced and used

4.3 Public Health Wales Public Health Genomics Programme and Pathogen Genomics Unit

Established in 2018 as part of the Welsh Government Precision Medicine Strategy, the Public Health Wales Pathogen Genomics Unit (PenGU) provides clinical pathogen genomics services on an All-Wales basis. Established following the 2017 Welsh Government Genomics for Precision Medicine Strategy, PenGU forms a key part of the clinical genomics ecosystem in Wales, and functions as a core component of Genomics Partnership Wales, the entity set up to deliver the Welsh Government strategy. PenGU operates a set of accredited clinical pathogen genomics services covering key pathogens such as HIV, Tuberculosis, *C. difficile* and SARS-CoV-2.

The genomics services, supported by specialist laboratories are world-leading in terms of both the type of data generated, and the speed with which it is produced and used. The genomics is utilised by teams across the organisation, and staff from across the Health Protection and Screening Services directorate are now directly involved in delivering services that depend upon genomics data.

The range and types of genomics services being delivered from within Public Health Wales are extensive. Genomics data is now routinely used for purposes ranging from diagnostic services, to inform patient management, through to analysis that has been generated over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic to inform policy and public health action at a population level. The cross-organisational nature of the genomics activity poses challenges and also creates opportunities to improve and re-imagine how we deliver a range of services. Reflecting the challenges and opportunities to optimise the application of genomics across the organisation, we established, in 2022, a cross-organisational programme for Public Health Genomics.

The establishment of the public health genomics programme required staff to work alongside at pace, navigating out of the pandemic. There are specific challenges balancing activities including the provision of new services, continuing to deliver and improve our existing services, and managing the operational requirements of supporting the delivery of a new Centre of Excellence for Precision Medicine. Our Public Health Genomics Programme will help further realise the potential of genomics in Wales.

More broadly, we continue to recognise the issue of workforce development. Genomics expertise, and particularly Bioinformatics/Data Science, remains a key area of need within the NHS more widely and in Public Health Wales in particular. In addition, as genomics data becomes more widely used, there is an increasing need to consider how to provide training for staff who may not work within PenGU/the Public Health Genomics Programme, but who may come into contact with genomics data as part of their work.



4.4 Vaccination and Immunisation

The Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme (VPDP) provides the Welsh Government, NHS Wales and the Welsh public with expert clinical, scientific and epidemiological advice for both vaccines, and the diseases which they prevent. The programme works with Health Protection bodies across the UK to co-ordinate the

response to outbreaks of vaccine preventable disease and support monitoring and delivery of vaccine programmes in Wales. The programme also has specific responsibilities for supporting the public and NHS professionals with information and evidence on vaccination to help people make an informed choice.

In 2022/23, vaccination has become the mainstay of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the COVID-19 response has changed with the developing epidemiology, VPDP has continued to ensure that the population have access to up to date information and has supported NHS Wales with the deployment of the latest vaccines.

2022/23 has also seen the emergence of new infectious threats and the re-emergence of older ones. We also supported the response to the MPox (previously known as monkey pox) outbreak, supporting NHS Wales to stand up a new vaccination programme for those at high risk at short notice. Additionally, we have supported the response to outbreaks in England of Vaccine Derived Polio Virus and Diphtheria, to ensure that Wales is prepared to detect and respond to those threats if seen in Wales, and to actively address under-vaccination through a catch-up campaign.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen a resurgent focus on the prevention of harm through vaccinations other than COVID-19. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has made recommendations for changes to the human

papillomavirus (HPV) and Shingles vaccination programmes which will be delivered in 2023/24. For VPDP, the work to prepare for these changes started in 2022/23 and has balanced the need for continuing COVID-19 response with the need to deliver major improvements in non-COVID programmes, to support NHS Wales towards delivery. Alongside the continuation of the delivery of the extensive routine vaccination programme and winter respiratory campaign, including Influenza.

In October 2023, the Welsh Government published the first national immunisation framework for Wales, which sets out the future strategy for vaccinations and immunisations in Wales. This strategy takes the learning from the COVID-19 pandemic and blends it with the good practice seen in Wales for other vaccinations. We have supported the Welsh Government and the NHS Executive/Delivery Unit, to create this vision for Wales, and to move towards implementation. The framework has Public Health principles at its core, and the challenges faced by VPDP over the next few years will include delivery of those core principles, including co-production and evidence-based quality improvement.

4.5 Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre

The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) supports our vision to achieve a healthier future for Wales through protecting the public from communicable diseases and environmental threats to health. Our role is to provide high quality field epidemiology, surveillance, scientific advice, research, and training in this area.

The team works with its stakeholders to collect, analyse, and interpret information for public health action. This can include detecting and investigating possible outbreaks of infectious disease, responding to emerging disease threats, and understanding how different population groups are affected by health risks in order to inform policy. CDSC collaborates with partners across the UK and internationally to share intelligence.

CDSC comprises specialty groups and themes including acute respiratory and vaccine-preventable infections, sexually transmitted infections, blood-borne viruses, tuberculosis and inequalities, healthcare associated infections and antimicrobial resistance, statistics, data science and genomic epidemiology, gastrointestinal, zoonotic and emerging infections, environmental and setting-specific surveillance.



The past year has seen a significant transition from pandemic working. With the reduced frequency of COVID-19 reporting and large reduction in testing, coupled with a resurgence of usual social and economic activity and associated disease transmission, our expanded staff have refocused on their usual disease areas, and will further develop new approaches. In addition to restarting and revising usual reporting, training, and research activities, the end of mass COVID-19 testing and return of seasonal viruses such as influenza and RSV required a shift in response and rapid expansion of hospital and community surveillance.

The pandemic has shown the importance of newer methodologies including data science and genomics, and the need for a stronger focus on determinants of disease from inequalities, settings such as care homes, and collaborating with the new UKHSA. Through our new specialty group, we have improved data and analytical capacity, linked datasets, and streamlined and automated processes.

Challenges have included the emergence in Wales of several new and important infections, including MPox and Hepatitis of unknown aetiology, as well as unseasonal and severe manifestations of endemic diseases, such as Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Group A Streptococcal infections. Some of this can be attributed to the suppression of these infections during the pandemic, with

associated changes in population immunity and epidemiology. Our new field epidemiology service is now fully operational and has provided rapid and in-depth support for these incidents, including analytic studies on foodborne outbreaks and modelling support for the m-pox incident.

CDSC has worked with partners, particularly microbiology and genomics, to address scientific questions through research-funded projects and surveillance data. We have presented work both in Wales, at our most successful Science in Health Protection Seminar, internationally at a European applied epidemiology meeting in Stockholm, and via peer reviewed publications.

To respond to the changing needs, CDSC has provided training for staff in newer methods and software, and provided training for others. We also continue to both benefit from and contribute to the UK Field epidemiology training programme, with the additional internally seconded fellows from 2022, improving equity of access. We have worked to improve staff well-being following the pandemic pressures, and to provide development routes for staff to progress their careers.



The Communicable Disease Inclusion Health Programme (CDIHP) provides an overarching and integrated structure for the health protection needs of vulnerable populations, encompassing the existing programmes of Substance Misuse and Vulnerable Groups, Health and Justice, and Sexual Health

4.6 Communicable Disease Inclusion Health

The Communicable Disease Inclusion Health Programme (CDIHP) provides an overarching and integrated structure for the health protection needs of vulnerable populations, encompassing the existing programmes of Substance Misuse and Vulnerable Groups, Health and Justice, and Sexual Health. The CDIHP strengthens resource and efficiency within health protection services as well as streamlining governance function. The CDIHP sits within the Integrated Health Protection Division complementing and supporting the existing programmes and functions through the provision of dedicated and specialist expertise related to high-risk settings and populations at increased risk of communicable disease, negative health outcomes, inequalities and inequities.

In January 2022, the proposal for the Communicable Disease Inclusion Health Programme (CDIHP) within Health Protection was accepted via our Directorate Leadership Team. Through 2022/23 the programme was established with work to appoint to the posts identified to begin to deliver the functions identified when the wider CDIHP programme was envisaged. Alongside this a work plan has been developed and, working with colleagues in Welsh Universities and specialist organisations providing for inclusion groups, a mapping exercise has begun to provide information on the geographical spread of inclusion groups and the services that support them. The exercise will also include identifying all related policy.

4.7 Environmental Public Health

The Environmental Public Health Service in Wales is delivered jointly by the Environmental Public Health (EPH) team at Public Health Wales and the UK Health Security Agency's Radiation, Chemicals and Environmental Hazards Directorate Wales (RCE-Wales). The teams are functionally integrated and operate a duty desk during office hours to respond to environmental incidents that occur in Wales and queries related to the environment that come from sources ranging from members of the public to national politicians. The duty desk is staffed by a duty scientist and duty manager. COVID-19 saw the team largely re-deployed to the response yet also continuing to deliver a reactive environmental public health service.

As the demands of the pandemic have receded, the team have seen a backlog of routine queries as well as much greater demand for support relating to the climate emergency than existed pre-pandemic. We are also now looking to work more proactively again, particularly supporting the legislation around Clean Air, 20mph, and Coal Tip Safety, but there are a wide range of other areas in which we are working. For example, the Public Health Wales part of the team is also delivering the environmental public health elements of the wider Public Health Wales response to the climate emergency, particularly in terms of public information in relation to extreme weather.



The team sits on the newly established Public Health Wales Climate Change Programme Board, representing Health Protection, and is also working across the UK with other public health agencies to collaborate to address the climate emergency.

We responded to a situation with potential for significant population harm at Baglan Bay, an almost continuous cycle of extreme weather events while dealing with a backlog of issues that had built during COVID-19.

The team has not benefitted from investment in the way that the rest of health protection has and is subject to increasing demands. The future resourcing going forward will need to be considered. It is also important to note that while the Public Health Wales team is 'integrated' with the UKHSA team, the UKHSA team is only able to support reactive incident response. Proactive environmental work sits mainly with our team and all of the climate work (both proactive and reactive – including extreme weather responses) that we do is delivered solely by our team.

There is also increasing demand for surveillance data to inform proactive EPH action in a range of areas. The Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) has recently assigned a consultant to support EPH work, including wider climate surveillance. An EPH information analyst, based within CDSC, has also been appointed and an Epidemiological Scientist and Advanced Epidemiological Data Scientist assigned to provide some support to Environmental and

Climate Surveillance. All of this is already enabling us to develop more robust data around specific environmental hazards e.g. carbon monoxide, but also to start to build intelligence to help to understand the health effects of climate and extreme weather and the datasets that enable us to see these signals of effect.

Internally, we have developed a complete "introduction to environmental public health" programme to support the development of wider resilience of the team. This provides a series of short overviews of key subjects and also offers opportunity to develop competency as part of a work placement. This is currently an internal programme, but there may be the scope in the future to consider whether some or all of it can be made available externally, particularly to environmental health officers to support their professional development.

We have also been considering the need for external subject specific training days. Although training covering the new Air Quality Cell (AQC) guidance will be led by Natural Resources Wales, we will be working with them to develop it.

4.8 Healthcare Associated Infections (HCAI), Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Prescribing Programme

The Healthcare Associated Infection, Antimicrobial Resistance and Prescribing Programme (HARP) provides the Welsh Government, NHS Wales, the wider health and care sector and the population of Wales with expert clinical, scientific, and epidemiological advice to reduce the burden of healthcare associated infections, and antimicrobial resistance. The programme has a key role in the delivery of the UK AMR Strategy within Wales.

The programme team is multi-disciplinary including experts in Infection Prevention and Control, Antimicrobial Pharmacy, Medical Microbiology, Surveillance and Epidemiology.

The work of the programme is delivered through the three main specialist work streams that make up the programme:



Surveillance - responsible for the collection, analysis, and feedback of surveillance data on healthcare associated infections, antimicrobial usage and resistance across the health and care sectors of Wales.



Antimicrobial Stewardship - responsible for the promotion of optimal antimicrobial prescribing.



Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) - responsible for the promotion of interventions and practice to prevent the spread and contain outbreaks of infection.

During the COVID-19 pandemic HARP programme team members were heavily involved in delivering COVID-19 surveillance and expert advice and guidance on Infection Prevention and Control and Antimicrobial Prescribing. The challenge during 2022/23 was to manage continued COVID-19 related work demands whilst also recovering the core work of the HARP programme.



The surveillance focus was on re-establishing the development work on expanding the HCAI surveillance, including taking forward innovations and developments that delivered nosocomial COVID-19 surveillance into a broader range of HCAI surveillance

The surveillance focus was on re-establishing the development work on expanding the HCAI surveillance, including taking forward innovations and developments that delivered nosocomial COVID-19 surveillance into a broader range of HCAI surveillance. During 2022-23, the antimicrobial surveillance programme was challenged by the roll out of a new pharmacy stock control system across Wales, which necessitated considerable work re-mapping data and continues to be a challenge to compile secondary care antimicrobial prescribing data. Antimicrobial usage data in primary care continued to be monitored and there was continued development of the antimicrobial portal. The return of staff from COVID-19 surveillance rotas allowed the recovery of HCAI and AMR regular surveillance reporting and support for the re-established HCAI and AMR Delivery Boards.

The Antimicrobial Stewardship and Infection Prevention and Control educational forums were re-established from the summer of 2022, holding the first face to face meetings, also with virtual access, since December 2019. The professional support work of the programme for IP&C and antimicrobial prescribing was able to re-focus as the requirements for COVID-19 specific advice receded. From May 2022, UK COVID-19 IPC Guidance was stood down and IPC guidance reverted to HARP programme IPC Guidance. The antimicrobial guidance group was also re-established.

4.9 Screening Services

We deliver, monitor, and evaluate seven population-based screening programmes, and coordinate the all-Wales managed clinical network for antenatal screening. The screening programmes are informed by evidence-based recommendations from the UK National Screening Committee, which are considered by the Wales Screening Committee and delivered in line with agreed Welsh Government policy.

The aims of the programmes are either to reduce incidence of disease (e.g., cervical screening) or improve early diagnosis to reduce the impact of the disease (e.g., breast screening). The division has a strong record of evaluation and a comprehensive programme of improvements and developments in line with policy decisions. There is an equitable offer of screening to the eligible population but there is variation in uptake and enabling informed consent to improve uptake and reduce inequity of uptake is a key priority.

The division's approach is to ensure that everyone eligible for screening has equitable access and the opportunity to take up their screening offer.

Recovery plans for Wales Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening, Diabetic Eye Screening Wales and Breast Test Wales have continued with additional recovery funding provided by Welsh Government. These programmes have achieved pre COVID-19 levels of activity (and above) to support recovery of the programmes. Increased activity in both Breast Test Wales and Diabetic Eye Screening Wales has resulted in a reduction in the backlogs in line with expectations.

Increasing screening activity in these programmes has been challenging with the need for additional clinic venues availability and ensuring adequate staff to cover. Workforce capacity has been a limiting factor with staff absence due to sick leave; COVID-19 illness, and not being able to recruit to established roles especially key clinical roles.



In May 2022, we opened the first screening centre of its kind on the high street in Mountain Ash. The dedicated screening centre is part of a brand new approach to help boost accessibility and uptake of screening

Alternative solutions to screening venues have been taken forward for areas where venues are limited with Diabetic Eye screening using a temporary mobile unit and Wales Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening using Welsh Blood and Tenovus vans. In May 2022, we opened the first [screening centre](#) of its kind on the high street in Mountain Ash. The dedicated screening centre is part of a brand new approach to help boost accessibility and uptake of screening. The centre houses multiple screening services all under one roof making it easier for people to access their screening offer.

We have worked hard to continue delivering screening services whilst industrial action was carried out. Royal Mail industrial action led to an alternate solution for Newborn Bloodspot test cards to be returned to the laboratory in a timely manner. A courier service was

urgently put in place working with midwifery services across Wales, which is being evaluated with a view to continuing this approach in the future. Industrial action in other areas has had an impact on delivery of screening appointments for some programmes in the latter part of the year.

Replacement of Cervical screening equipment in the Screening Laboratory has progressed overcoming challenges of reconfiguration within the Laboratory. The new platform has been implemented recently and tested successfully whilst maintaining services.

5. Strategic Theme 3: Support Improvements in the Quality and Safety of Health and Care Services

Our aim is to support the creation of the best quality health and care system for Wales so that everyone has access to safe, effective and efficient care in the right place and at the right time across the whole care system. To do this we work alongside organisations across Wales to create the conditions, build the capability and make the connections for improvement to flourish. This is also true of the way we are driving quality, improvement and innovation across our own organisation.

The past year has been the busiest and most rewarding year of our Improvement Cymru journey to date. There has been a balance between responding to urgent need and laying the foundations for longer term fundamental change.

Leading for Patient Safety

Over 40 senior clinical leads from across all Health Boards and Trusts took part in a five-month development programme focusing on their role as leaders of patient safety. The network created from this programme now directly sponsors patient safety improvement projects in the Safe Care Collaborative.

Foundational Site Visits

Two-day visits provided an opportunity for Improvement Cymru and Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) to spend time with staff, teams and departments across each organisation. Summary reports highlighted good practice, alongside challenges and opportunities for further improvements. These have informed local quality strategies and improvement focus.

Coaching for Patient Safety

Over 45 delegates took part in the four-month development programme, building improvement coaching skills focused on the Framework for Safe, Effective and Reliable Care. The network created from this programme now directly coaches patient safety improvement projects in the Safe Care Collaborative.

Safe Care Collaborative launch

The collaborative brings together teams, coaches and senior leaders for safety from the Health Boards and trusts in Wales to focus on common safety priorities spanning four workstream themes: leadership, community care, ambulatory care, and acute care. Members of the collaborative workstreams receive support from Improvement Cymru and IHI, and access a series of learning sessions, coaching and networking to learn together to collectively achieve the safe care priorities. To date we have delivered two (of five) learning sessions, established four workstreams, undertaken eight coaching calls (24 to follow) and visited ten sites with local teams. In addition, we have congratulated 23 Leading Patient Safety graduates, trained 39 coaches, identified 41 improvement projects and welcomed 300 Safe Care Collaborative members (and growing).



Extensive work took place with colleagues working in maternity and neonatal services, analysis data entries and site visits to create a rich picture of bright spots of existing practice, the challenges being faced and what opportunities exist to share learning

Highlighting Excellence and Innovative Practice

Targeted Safety Improvements

Real Time Demand Capacity (RTDC): To support hospitals to reduce length of stay in hours to create flow and build situational awareness, Improvement Cymru worked with the originators of the RTDC methodology to train and coach staff to create behaviour change at all levels of an organisation to reduce length of stay in hours and improve patient flow.

Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme: Improvement Cymru undertook a national Discovery phase for a new NHS Wales Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme (MatNeoSSP). Extensive work took place including conversations with colleagues working in maternity and neonatal services, analysis data entries and site visits to create a rich picture of bright spots of existing practice, the challenges being faced and what opportunities exist to share learning.

Wales Cancer Network: Working in partnership with the Wales Cancer Network this work aims to increase the pace and reliability of the early diagnostic phase of the pathway. Three multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) are testing and working through opportunities to improve the coordination and management of the early part of the patient pathway.

Mental Health Improvements

Dementia: The team supported the Welsh regions during a period of readiness and implementation of the [Dementia Pathway of Standards](#) that align to the Dementia Action Plan for Wales. There has been extensive collaboration and coaching with each region and via national work streams to support key areas such as hospital-specific self-assessment tools, movement and mobility campaign, memory assessment guides for assessment and diagnosis.

Outcome measures: Funding was provided to test approaches for embedding agreed patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs) and patient-reported experience measures (PREMs). This work is supported by those with lived experience, Health Boards, social care, third sector and professional bodies. From this work, outcome measures training was developed and delivered, and so far it has been undertaken by at least one staff member in:



78% of all adult mental health teams in Wales



88% of all adult learning disability services



100% of children's mental health and learning disability services.

Learning Disability Improvements

Physical health work programme: The programme identified evidence-based priority areas in respect of avoidable health problems, delayed treatment, and premature and/or avoidable deaths. Improvement work will continue until March 2025, and current headlines include health check packs, awareness training, addressing constipation risks, accessible vaccines campaign and a health profile campaign.

Quality support

Duty of Quality: The Duty of Quality is one element of the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 and to support its implementation, Improvement Cymru chaired and provided subject knowledge expertise and programme support to two national duty of quality workstreams.

Quality Management System: In response to the Duty of Quality and the Quality and Safety Framework, Improvement Cymru has focused on implementing a quality management system through a pilot in Public Health Wales.

Capability building

Improvement Cymru Academy: The Improving Quality Together series has been updated to a new Improvement Series. Five new courses were developed and delivered, two Health Boards were supported in delivering courses, and training developed and delivered for Real Time Demand Capacity work and the Safe Care Collaborative.

Education Programme for Patients (EPP): Improvement Cymru, in partnership with EPP trainers/coordinators in Health Boards, have delivered courses on chronic disease management, diabetes, chronic pain and cancer with new courses in development.

Q Lab Cymru: The team have collaborated across several areas of interest including supporting colleagues from Public Health Wales's wider determinants of health team and the Wales Cancer Network.

Other Highlights

Improvement Cymru national conference: The Improvement Cymru national conference was a celebration of improvement across health and social care in Wales and beyond.

Podcast: Talking Improvement: A new podcast series, Talking Improvement, was launched providing a safe space to talk all things improvement.

Return of the NHS Awards Wales: We hosted the NHS Wales Awards following a two-year gap due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Challenges and Risks

Whilst during 2022/2023 Improvement Cymru has developed the breadth and depth of its support to NHS Wales, this has been impacted upon by the responsiveness of the system, which is still facing increasing challenges.

Learning and areas for improvement

There is overwhelming engagement from Executives in NHS Wales to work together on national system-wide quality and safety priorities across Wales. However, engagement of the wider system is taking longer than expected.

During 2023/2024, Improvement Cymru will transition to become the quality, safety and improvement function within the NHS Wales Executive. Improvement Cymru will work closely with NHS Wales Executive partners to align and integrate our support to organisations.



During 2022-23 the National Safeguarding Service (NSS) rebranded and refreshed its focus to strengthen its position in shaping and guiding the NHS safeguarding landscape in Wales

Safeguarding

During 2022-23, the National Safeguarding Service (NSS) rebranded and refreshed its focus to strengthen its position in shaping and guiding the NHS safeguarding landscape in Wales. The NSS are a team of designated safeguarding professionals in NHS Wales who provide expertise, standardised practice, training, and specialist guidance to colleagues, multi-agency organisations and government.

The NSS coordinates the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network which links local and national policy to develop a collaborative approach to safeguarding delivery across the NHS in Wales.

Key achievements in 2022/23 include:



Development of a quality assurance tool for NHS commissioned care placements, currently being piloted in Hywel Dda University Health Board, to support a consistent approach for NHS bodies who commission care services.



Succession planning in safeguarding services – a comprehensive review of current corporate safeguarding provision in the NHS in Wales and implications for future workforce planning.



Improvements to the Safeguarding Maturity Matrix to accommodate the duty of quality. The Safeguarding Maturity Matrix (SMM) is a self-assessment tool which supports safeguarding quality improvement across NHS Wales.



An update to the Procedural Response to Unexpected Death in Children (PRUDiC) was launched in March 2023. This process facilitates the coordination of services following the unexpected death of a child and ensures there is immediate liaison and bereavement support for families.

Maximising opportunities to inform safeguarding practice through other functions within the organisation, such as the Child Death Review Panel, Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU), the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Hub, World Health Organization and Behavioural Insights Unit.

The NHS Wales 'Safeguarding Together: Then, Now, Next' Conference took place at City Hall, Cardiff on 8 March 2023, marking 10 years of the NHS Wales Safeguarding Network. It presented a life journey approach on how safeguarding services have evolved and changed in response to legislation, learning from tragic events and the voice of those abused and neglected – also a recognition and call to arms that there is more to do to improve the safety of our most vulnerable populations and enable health organisations deliver high quality services to safeguard the people of Wales.

6. Strategic Theme 4: Maximise the Use of Digital, Data and Evidence to Improve Public Health

This year has been characterised by two major themes – recovery and foundation. Recovering after COVID-19 and setting in place new foundations to build back our services. We have published statistics and reports from our major registers and programmes in more accessible formats and focussed on publishing research that enables better delivery of health care and health information. This year we also introduced two new areas – data and data science – which have delivered a number of open-ended programmes and deliverables to add to the stable of registration, analysis, research, evaluation and knowledge sharing.

With the diversity in programmes of work within the Data, Knowledge and Research Directorate, there are many key achievements that have been made across the organisation and in collaboration with key partners. A selection of which are detailed below:

- Brought together different datasets to understand the impact of a shift to [working from home](#) due to the pandemic on health and well-being, and found it had a more negative impact specifically on some younger groups.
- Completed the largest survey of health and well-being amongst nurses and midwives in Wales during the pandemic, supported by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and Royal College of Midwives (RCM).
- Delivered research examining [the role of community volunteering in pandemic response and recovery \(funded by the Health Foundation\)](#) - the findings informed Welsh Parliament's Local Government and Housing Committee's inquiry into community assets; and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action examination on the value of volunteering within integrated models of care in relation to the new Health and Social Care Framework in Wales.
- Developed the novel Rapid Cancer Diagnosis Dataset (RCDD) in the SAIL Databank environment with multiple academic and NHS partners to enable rapid research on the effect of the pandemic on cancer diagnosis and stage - academic papers were published and early findings were shared with policy makers; we are currently further developing novel data as near-real time cancer incidence experimental statistics to be publicly available, and to support an externally-funded improving bowel cancer audit.
- Produced four rapid reviews and one rapid evidence map aimed at answering important questions relating to COVID-19 and public health strategies.
- Secured funding, commissioned, and completed an architecture review, three organisation-wide discoveries, and two alpha-phase projects. This has delivered a broad range of insights that will form the foundation of user-centred design work in the coming years.
- Refreshed our organisational Research and Evaluation Strategy, aligned to our Long Term Strategy, following extensive engagement and prioritisation.

- Strengthened our evaluation capabilities and established a comprehensive programme supporting Public Health Wales and external partners to evaluate what works. For example, in our outcome evaluation of the All-Wales Diabetes Prevention Programme we developed a system to support practitioners to collect key information on who was offered, accepted the service and the outcomes. We also designed a research study, embedded in the programme (in collaboration with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to deliver more robust estimates on outcomes across groups.
- Other evaluations in development include vaccine prevention programmes, Hapus programme, Healthy Start Scheme and Mind Our Futures.
- Published a report for the Child Measurement Programme (CMP) 2020-2021 data, which was limited to two health board regions as data collection was still impacted across the other health boards. A draft options appraisal considering a second CMP measurement has been completed and submitted to sub-committees of the Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales Board.
- Published official statistics on congenital anomalies from the Congenital Anomalies Registration and Information System (CARIS) in Autumn 2022. The CARIS team have continued to support the Rare Diseases Implementation Group (RDIG) Wales, with pilot work in progress to provide LHB level data for rare diseases.
- Launched the Real Time Suicide Surveillance System in April 2022, collecting information on all suspected suicide deaths in Wales. The first annual surveillance report is due Autumn 2023.
- Published a patterns and trends report on 10 years of child deaths in Wales in April 2022 and hosted a webinar on the Child Death Review Programme to over 100 stakeholders.
- Continued to develop the [Wales Public Health Rapid Overview Dashboard](#) which was adopted for formal Board reporting in the summer 2022 and helped stimulate discussion with the Minister early in the new year. This already included some near-real time cancer data.
- Launched a new version of the [Public Health Outcomes Framework](#) (PHOF) reporting tool in the autumn with a further iteration published in December. The development and design of this dashboard was taken forward using Agile methods with an active user group at its heart.

- In partnership with colleagues in Cardiff University, we developed a [dashboard](#) to visualise School Health Research Network (SHRN) data on the health and well-being of children aged 11-16 years. The development was informed by an active user group with representation from public health, education, Welsh Government, and academic sectors.
- Participated in the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership (ICBP) module examining the effects of the pandemic in Wales compared to other countries across the world.
- We have had our official statistics reviewed against the code of practice for statistics and for accessibility, and will continue to work on implementing the recommendations. This included reporting Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer incidence for the first time.
- Developed new publications and interactive tools with input from user groups so they meet our users' needs.
- Recruited a new data science team, whose first projects include developing projections of disease prevalence and relevant risk factors out to 2035. With this new team we have set up the cross-organisation data science community, to help share knowledge, build skills and develop collaborative working in data science.
- Supported income generation of £1.5m to Wales in 2022/23.

Highlighting excellence and innovative practice

This year we spent time focusing on adapting our products to better meet the needs of our users, whilst ensuring methodological quality and transparency. Many of our new products are in formats that better meet these requirements and can be produced by us more rapidly, enabling stakeholders access to the evidence in a timely manner.

Examples of these new products are:



[Evidence Maps](#) (e.g. on smoking cessation)



[Topic Evidence Summaries](#) (e.g. Interventions to increase active travel)



[Agile Scoping Reviews](#) (e.g. Maximising uptake of pre-habilitation interventions)

Our data specialists have concentrated on enabling colleagues in digital, registers, screening and Improvement Cymru teams. We have delivered projects, training and co-production exercises, as well as workshops and learning experiences to increase the skills and capability of teams across the organisation.

We have successfully been awarded a further 3 years funding from the Health Foundation, to collaborate with Networked Data Lab (NDL) reflecting the excellence of the work to date. The NDL continues to innovate in linked data, recently working across multiple partners to bring together Local Authority and primary care data on unpaid carers. This novel approach improves our understanding on:



the overlap of unpaid carers identified across sectors and their needs.



raising important insights in support of the Wales Carers strategy.



how to identify and support unpaid carers in Wales.

In further innovation, we carried out the first study using census linkage to look at cancer screening uptake data by ethnic group, enabling a population-scale analysis of inequalities.

Our knowledge on digital health and inequalities led to the World Health Organization (WHO) commissioning us to complete [one of the most comprehensive reviews of equity within digital health technology](#). The report has been shared across the WHO European region and is shaping WHO's digital action plans and we will continue to strengthen these links for future programmes and supporting innovation in Wales.



Key challenges and risks

We can identify potential improvements to services across the organisation, but a great deal of the opportunity for automation, waste reduction and efficiency that can be made will require a more mature understanding of the interplay between digital and non-digital service transformation. Without clear channel strategies and user-centred design philosophies we are unlikely to achieve the full benefit that our insights show are available.

Achieving Confidentiality Advisory Group (CAG) long term data collection permissions for the Adult Rare Diseases surveillance registry remains in progress.

Learning and areas for improvement

We can be much clearer about the effort required for true user centred transformation. We also need to be more able to work in multidisciplinary partnership across digital services, procurement and commercial, clinical and communications teams, in order to deliver effective transformation of services. We have examples of good practice but can be much better in how we engage with users and the public to shape the work we do.

7. Enabling the successful delivery of our Plan

Our enabling functions have been pivotal to the successful delivery of our public health priorities and in continuing to support wider organisational recovery over the past year. Our enablers have played a critical role in the leadership and delivery of a number of major areas of work, alongside our role in the response to COVID-19, and the delivery of our full range of statutory functions and activities.



**Our strategic objectives for 2022-2025
focussed on actions we could take in the
short- to medium-term to move us towards
achieving our long-term ambitions as set out
in our People Strategy**

7.1 Our People

Our workforce is at the heart of our ability to deliver our aims and to protect and improve the public's health. Our People Strategy provides direction and focus to shape our future workforce, the type of organisation we aspire to be, our culture, ways of working as well as optimising relationships and working in collaboration. 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 achieving our long-term ambitions, we need to ensure that we provide all our people with the environment, skills and knowledge they need to meet the challenges ahead. We want to attract and retain people in public health, to deliver our Long-Term Strategy and to create a positive impact in the communities we serve.

Our strategic objectives for 2022-2025 focussed on actions we could take in the short- to medium-term to move us towards achieving our long-term ambitions as set out in our People Strategy.

Our objectives and key achievements to date are summarised below:

Increased ability and agility to deploy resources where needed, reducing silos and increasing collaboration and cross boundary working

- The Directorate and Divisional Assurance Dashboards have been rolled out to enable managers to proactively utilise people data to inform planning, decision-making and team management.
- We have fully integrated our dashboard approach into all aspects of governance and dashboards are reviewed at Board level and by the executive team on a monthly basis. The data informs decisions around investment in interventions, where to prioritise finance and other resource, where to engage in deeper dives to capture additional qualitative data and the general well-being of the workforce.
- We have reviewed and refreshed the Management and Leadership Framework through engagement across the organisation.
- We have increased capability in change management skills through reviewing the Managing Change Masterclass and adapting it to better suit virtual delivery. Pre-course material has also been developed, allowing the focus of the virtual session to be interactive and participative.
- 11 sessions of the Managing Change Masterclass have been delivered throughout the year, all of which have been well evaluated.
- Further improvement activity has been identified and has been taken forward through a Task and Finish group in partnership with Trades Unions.
- Re-commissioned to ensure provision of the Managing Change Masterclass throughout 2023-24 to increase capability and target areas impacted by planned change programmes.
- Building a common understanding and agreed approach to commissioning (internal and external) that will support our planning and resourcing for initiatives. Further refinement of draft principles, frameworks and development of resources required to support this activity is scheduled for completion during this coming year.

Actively plan and manage towards our agreed optimum workforce size and shape

- Rolled out a revised approach to Strategic Workforce Planning to enable the organisation to better understand its current workforce and how we can build interventions to better attract, develop and retain the current workforce to meet future needs.
- Successful transfer of Public Health Consultants into Local Health Boards.

An employee value proposition and brand that works for all, embracing flexibility, career satisfaction, inclusivity and healthy lives

- Co-designed and developed our Employer Value Proposition (People Promise), along with a road map to deliver and embed.
- Pilot of our approach to agile working, Work How it Works Best.
- Co designed a behavioural framework to support delivery of desired culture and employee experience.

A compelling cultural narrative

- We have assessed our current and ideal culture and have reviewed outputs from assessment to inform future activity towards developing our organisational culture.
- We submitted a portfolio of evidence under the Diverse Cymru Cultural Competence Scheme in October 2022 and were awarded Silver Plus One level. This is the highest achievement for any NHS organisation in Wales.
- Our Workforce Diversity Data was published in December 2022, outlining the work undertaken towards creating and maintaining an inclusive organisation where everyone can be themselves at work. The report shows progress in all areas, although we still have a way to go to be truly representative, particularly in the area of Disability employment.

Widen access and identify, attract and recruit the best available talent, which more accurately reflects the communities we serve

- We have begun engaging with communities to better understand barriers experienced by under-represented groups.
- Updated training, guidance and information on recruitment and make available to all staff.
- Implemented an integrated approach to engaging young people from all backgrounds and set out how we will build relationships with schools and academia to raise our profile as an employer.

Create a clear approach and investment plans to develop or access the skills required to deliver our strategic priorities

- Introduced first cohort of five Kickstart Work Placements.
- Two colleagues secured permanent internal opportunities and two utilised the experience to secure employment opportunities elsewhere.



Highlighting Excellence and Innovative Practice

At the Healthcare People Management Association Cymru Conference and Awards Ceremony on the 1 March 2023, the work of the Public Health Wales People and Organisational Development team was recognised with two awards: Excellence in Organisational Development and Workforce Analytics. These national awards celebrate the incredible work that is ongoing throughout NHS Wales.

The Excellence in Organisational Development award recognised the design, implementation and evaluation of Work How It Works Best, and how the trial has significantly benefited the organisation. The judges were impressed with our approach to project management and team-working, as well as the evaluation process which is already evidencing the positive impact the trial is having on the employees of Public Health Wales.

The award for Workforce Analytics highlighted how our Performance Assurance Dashboard and Directorate and Divisional Dashboards have improved the data literacy of decision-makers, enabling them to interrogate people analytics in greater detail and through different lenses to provide assurance, make decisions, prioritise improvement activities, and evaluate interventions relating to our people. This category recognises how the analysis of workforce data delivers insight, which generates action, leading to better decision-making and better business performance.



Both awards have been the result of a real team effort - across the organisation - and we are proud of the differences that Work How It Works Best and the Dashboards are making to people at Public Health Wales.

Key Challenges and Risks

We continue to face challenges which impact on the work we do and our workforce. The availability of staff, new ways of working and expectations and perspectives of staff. Factors such as an ageing population, larger numbers of people working to a later age, socio-economic challenges, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the European Union transition and cost of living crisis all affect our staff.

We need to be able to recruit and develop a more diverse workforce that better reflects the communities we serve and can provide insight into the needs and motivations of all our service users. We need to harness and utilise advances in technology; support learning agility and investment in continuous development and reskilling and to find, develop and retain the talent needed to execute our strategic priorities for emerging skills, particularly around digital, data and technology.

We need to determine the right culture to support our refreshed Long-Term Strategy and assess where we are now, understanding the behaviours that both help and hinder delivery and positive employee experience. We also need to design and embed ways of working to 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 need to support the use of the Welsh language and bilingual careers as demand for Welsh language services increase, develop and support our leaders and managers to lead with compassion and manage a diverse workforce and embed change effectively, and build strategic relationships with partners and suppliers to both deliver our services and strengthen access to capacity and talent.

Our Welsh Language Annual Reports are available on our [website](#) detailing key activity undertaken to promote the Welsh language, support the needs of our staff, and ensure compliance with the Welsh Language Standards. The 2022/23 Welsh Language Annual Report will be available on our [website](#) in due course.

Learning and Areas for Improvement

Following a pilot approach to [Work How it Works Best](#) in 2022/23 and based on a clear understanding of where and how our people work best, we will look to take what we have [learned](#) and use these insights to shape policies, practices, and ways of working which enable our people to thrive.

Having fully appreciated the value of an engaged workforce, following a broad consultation and an assessment of our current and ideal cultures, we are developing and articulating a compelling cultural narrative, underpinned by our values and behavioural framework. All colleagues will be able to see, and share in their own words, how our Long-Term Strategy is supported by, and delivered through, our culture.

Our inclusive and consultative approach will enable the design of an employee value proposition and brand that works for all, reflecting employees' experiences and expectations. We will develop new processes to support all stages of people's careers and we will support everyone to understand why employee well-being, diversity, and inclusion matters.



7.2 Operations and Finance

Long Term Strategy

During the year, we have developed our new long term strategy, *Working Together for a Healthier Wales*. It sets out our long term strategic ambitions for how we will tackle the population health challenges facing Wales in the coming years, and our commitment to working together for a healthier Wales. While the current challenges that we face in Wales are stark, we believe that now is the time to set out a bold long term vision for achieving a healthier Wales by 2035.



We are committed to working towards 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. We will do this through focusing on the delivery of our six strategic priorities:



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



These will also act as our organisational Well-being Objectives and we will embrace the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 five ways of working to help us implement our new strategy.

In delivering our strategy, we have the opportunity to build on the partnership working and collaboration that underpinned our response to COVID-19. We have also seen the power and impact of embracing innovative ways of working, such as harnessing the potential of big data and new technologies. This will serve as a corner stone to the delivery of our strategy and how we work in the future.

Health on the high street – Opening our first high street screening centre

In May 2022, Public Health Wales' opened its doors to the first screening centre of its kind on a high street in Wales. The dedicated screening centre is part of a brand new approach to help boost accessibility and uptake of screening. The centre houses multiple screening services all under one roof making it easier for people to access their screening offer.

Based in Mountain Ash, the centre is the result of a person-centred, partnership approach supported by Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC, and has been designed with public accessibility as a priority, making it easier for people to attend screening appointments.

Public Health Wales hopes this new model can be the blue print for the future of health screening in Wales. It is the first time that the organisation has leased and rejuvenated a building specifically to offer multiple screening programmes under one roof, in the heart of the community. It brings together services for three national programmes: diabetic eye, abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) and newborn hearing screening. Just under 8,000 people will be invited to screening at the centre in its first year.

The Centre was officially opened by the Minister for Health and Social Services, Eluned Morgan MS along with senior executives of Public Health Wales and Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council on 16 August 2022.

The new screening centre contributes to the Welsh Government's commitment to deliver better public access to health professionals.

Public Health Wales worked in partnership with the Council to carry out a full re-fit to enable this fantastic regional multi-screening facility to be developed in Mountain Ash. The building has been refurbished to a bespoke design with a focus on ensuring that it is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. Examples of how this has been achieved include the re-use of carpet tiles and furniture from previous Public Health Wales offices, as well as the provision of additional workspace, providing staff with the option to work more locally, rather than travel to offices further afield.

Modernisation of Clwydian House, Wrexham

The Our Space programme was originally launched in November 2013 with the aim of creating “a workplace for the future which enables efficient, effective and flexible ways of working.” These principles are being applied across our estate.

In 2020, the Executive Team agreed to commence the third phase of the Our Space Programme to review our estate in North Wales. Due to the COVID-19 response, the project was paused however. It recommenced in August 2022 and plans were developed to modernise Clwydian House as the first piece of work in Phase 3 of Our Space. Staff were engaged with to understand their requirements and to understand their future ways of working and the project also incorporated learnings from our experiences of working through COVID-19.

The refurbishment was completed in February 2023. As part of the strip out works, we worked with Collecteco while clearing the building in advance of the strip out works and £5,950 value was donated to the community, 1,890kg CO2e avoided and 2,250kg diverted from landfill. As part of the fit out, 220m2 of Grade A recycled carpet was laid, a shower installed and bike racks to allow for green travel. All work was completed by a local born and bred builder to Wrexham – keeping the costs in Wales, with 80% of the



workforce from Wales. Ziptaps (instant boiling water) have been installed and the metal used from the ceiling tile framing has being recycled further supporting the organisations contribution to the Welsh Government net zero target by 2030.

Outbreak and Incident Support

The Communications Division advised, supported and led on public and system communications for 18 incidents and outbreaks during 2022/23. Of those, the Monkeypox Outbreak was a significant communications event, requiring intense communications support to the system.

Project and Programme Management Community of Practice/ Feasibility Assessments to Inform in-year Planning Decisions

During the year we have worked to develop the project and programme management profession. We launched our project and programme management community of practice in September 2022 and have created a virtual network for the profession to share best practice and development opportunities with the community and enable peer support. The community of practice provides an active space for members to develop their project and programme skills, share new knowledge, and increase awareness of project activity across the organisation with the aim of driving collaboration and innovation across the organisation.

We have continued to innovate in the way we assess the feasibility of our plans, creating new insights to influence our planning assumptions and decision making. Linking data in new ways has enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of the interdependencies in our plans and enabled us to visualise complex issues.



Climate Change Programme Board Established

Public Health Wales recognises it has a key role to play across a number of areas to address climate change. Our approach to decarbonisation is outlined in our Decarbonisation Action Plan which was agreed by the Executive Team in April 2022 however the organisation recognised a cross organisational approach was required in order to successfully support the organisations response to climate change. Therefore, a Climate Change Programme Board was established during 2022/23 to:



Agree a strategic direction on Public Health Wales' role in tackling the impact of climate change on public health.



Agree a co-ordinated approach to responding to requests for evidence, information or support.



Become an exemplar organisation in our approach to decarbonisation.



Monitor commitments to climate change work in the current IMTP and identify opportunities for cross organisational working.

The cross organisational programme consists of three work streams focusing on:



Strategic Direction aiming to bring people together to develop the organisation's co-ordinated, unified approach to Climate Change and to support the organisation to achieve our long term objectives outlined in the Long Term Strategy.



Co-ordinating the approach to requests for Public Health Wales' opinion so that stakeholders can access public health advice and opinion on areas relating to climate change and develop a repository of evidence and opinion provided for easy access for all staff.



Being an Exemplar organisation in our approach to decarbonisation which provides a mechanism for implementing and monitoring the organisation's Decarbonisation Action Plan.

Financial Performance

We produced a Welsh Government approved Strategic Plan and met our financial duties to break-even for the financial year 2021-22 and for the rolling three-year period 2019-22. We also met the NHS Wales target to pay 95% of non-NHS contracts within 30 days.

The Organisation submitted its draft financial statements within the required timescales, which were considered by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and the Board in June 2022. Audit Wales issued an unqualified opinion on the 2021-22 Financial Statements, except for the regularity opinion, for which a qualified opinion was issued. This was in relation to the Auditor General qualifying his regularity opinion, at eight of eleven NHS bodies, due to the accounts including expenditure and funding in respect of clinicians' pension tax liabilities.

See the [Annual Accounts Report](#) for a detailed overview of our financial performance in 2022/23.

Roll out of Finance Development Programme

The initial band 3-6 development programme was piloted and run jointly by Hywel Dda University Health Board and Swansea Bay UHB. We worked with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership to ensure that our lowed banded staff had the same development opportunities by offering our own programme covering six modules and six cohorts, approximately 50 attendees across our three organisations. The modules were delivered in a mixed way, with 4 being provided internally and two provided by an external company. They were a mixture of face to face and virtual delivery. The feedback has been extremely positive from colleagues that attended, providing a great opportunity for staff networking with the two other organisations involved.

7.3 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.

Key achievements in 2022/23 include:



Improving reach and engagement of our communications through gaining a deeper understanding of our audiences has been a key theme in our work this year. Using insights based on audience research, we have been able to tailor content and messaging to focus on meeting user needs ensuring that we are responsive to emerging issues. For example, in response to the extreme heat conditions in summer 2022, we issued actionable public health advice through our social media channels tailored to specific audiences.



Actions implemented to improve accessibility on our website following an audit by Digital Accessibility Centre - this included both technical fixes and content changes to improve the user experience. As part of these changes, we are moving towards publishing our patient leaflets and other key documents in HTML format. To ensure these improvements are sustainable, we have invested in accessibility training for all digital officers and have updated our publishing guidelines.

Transfer of Local Public Health Team to Health Boards

On 30 September 2022, we successfully supported the Local Public Health Team transfer to the health boards. The project covered eight organisations, Public Health Wales and seven Local Health Boards, with the aim of increasing the focus on improving the health and well-being of the local population. We set out an extensive engagement plan, working closely with staff, Executive Directors of Public Health, Health Boards, and Trade Unions to work through the transfer arrangements and communicated with Welsh Government and external stakeholders to keep them informed as this transition progressed.

The formal consultation period for the transfer of the Local Public Health Teams took place between 24 May 2022 and continued to 31 July. Throughout this consultation period, information was shared with staff about the process to be followed, any additional measures proposed by the Health Boards and key contact details. Meetings were held with staff on a one to one and group basis and any questions raised in these were responded to and informed ongoing planning.

This embedding of specialist public health resources and skills at the local level, will further enable health boards, and local partners, to increase their focus on improving the health and well-being of the local population. The transfer also clarifies strategic and operational accountability for local delivery with the aim of strengthening the wider public health system in Wales.

There are still very close working links between our organisation and the Local Public Health Teams, as we continue to strengthen our collective local and national approaches to tackle health inequalities, improve health and well-being, and work together in a strong, connected and aligned way. The project included significant work from Finance, IT, Estates and Communications to ensure a smooth transfer of 176 staff, IT equipment, furniture and mobile devices.

Key Challenges and Risks

Delivery of net zero target and adapting to hybrid working arrangements:

Due to the nature and variety of the services that are delivered in Public Health Wales, our infrastructure and ways of working, achieving the NHS Wales decarbonisation of net zero will be very challenging. Considerable work is underway to identify areas and implement projects to support the decarbonisation agenda across Public Health Wales however like many organisations, understanding and calculating the impact of our work on the environment remains difficult. We recognise that considerable work is required in the area of Procurement and also to support staff to adopt more sustainable behaviours to support the organisations carbon footprint reduction. During the COVID-19 pandemic approximately 3000 pieces of equipment have been issued to staff to ensure, not only that staff are able to work safely but also provides flexibility for staff to choose how they work best and hopefully make more environmentally sustainable choices. In addition to this, during 2022/23, we have continued to review the estate we require now and in the future and taking opportunities to rationalise where possible but also create innovative Hubs bring services together creating benefits for not only Public Health Wales but also the service user. Many of these projects will continue into 2023/24.

Cyber security: The management of cyber security risks will continue to be a priority for Public Health Wales. Through working with the Cyber Resilience Unit in Digital Health and Care Wales in response to the Network and Information Systems Directive, we set out actions to mitigate risks and prioritise our resources for cyber security. Whilst a recent internal audit report was positive of our approaches, this is an area that requires continued improvement and diligence. Additionally, recent discovery work is helping us improve our development processes and better understand our architecture. These agile approaches and principles are embedded in the delivery of the Digital and Data Strategy.

Learning and areas for Improvement: Public Health Wales implemented the lessons learned from the announcement of Cervical Screening internal changes in January 2022 by implementing enhanced audience testing and signoff processes in delivering the Cervical Screening campaign in July 2022. We are working to include public testing as part for our standard processes for all campaigns.

7.4 Quality, Improvement and Risk Management

Our Quality, Nursing, and Allied Health Professionals Directorate is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place for quality assurance and integrated governance. This includes clinical, information, corporate governance and works closely with the Board Secretary and Head of the Board Business Unit.

Records Management Project

Public Health Wales is a public body with responsibilities under the Public Records Act 1958 and the Government of Wales Act 2006 for management of Welsh Public Records. In order to strengthen our corporate approach to records management, Phase II of the records management project was completed in 2022/23, including the launch of a designated Electronic Document and Records Management System. This system provides effective, efficient and consistent archiving of records.

Risk Management

Managing risk is essential to running a successful organisation. It should be at the heart of decision-making and allocating 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 2022/23, we reviewed and revised our strategic risks and

corporate risks in line with the newly refreshed Long Term Strategy. We also developed a system for establishing the risk appetite across all levels of the organisation that align with the expectation of the Public Health Wales' Board.

Civica Implementation Project

Our new Service User Experience (Civica) system was launched in April 2022 and aims to capture feedback from our service users and / or stakeholders efficiently, equitably and in a consistent manner across the organisation. We use it to understand real-time feedback and experiences about services, programmes and functions, which in turn supports prioritisation and drives quality improvements. During 2022/23, there were 78 surveys created within the system and as of 31 March 2023 there, are 333 active Civica accounts within the organisation.

Infection, Prevent and Control (IPC)

We are a member of the all-Wales working group 'Core Ward Audits' which aims to standardise IP and C audit tools used across Wales. The implementation of changes remain ongoing and will be introduced alongside the IPC Link Worker Programme.

Highlighting excellence and innovative practice

Developing Health Care Professional Students' Placements

During 2022/23, we worked collaboratively with Higher Education Institutes to offer student nurse / midwife / occupational therapists appropriately designed five day bespoke placements within our organisation. These placements commenced in October 2022, with four students completing as of the 31 March 2023. This programme will continue into 2023/24.

The Young Ambassadors' Programme



Our Young Ambassadors' Programme provides young people across Wales with the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge to support and influence the delivery of our Long Term Strategy. In February 2023, a Young Ambassadors' residential was held, attended by a total of 34 young people between 12-21 years old, with the majority staying overnight. The residential programme covered the Cost of Living Crisis, our Long Term Strategy and young people and vaccinations.

HEAR2 Project

Health Experiences of Asylum seekers and Refugees (HEAR2): how well are their interpretation needs met? This was a collaborative project between Public Health Wales, Health and Care Research Wales and Welsh Government, which looked at producing new evidence to meet the interpretation needs of asylum seekers and refugees with potential benefits in healthcare quality, safety, and physical and mental health outcomes. The results will guide policy recommendations for the commissioning and delivery of interpretation services in Wales, benefiting patients, the public, and the NHS; this research has wider implications for all who need or provide NHS health care through interpretation services.

Public Health Wales Merit Award Badge Project



An internal Equality and Health Impact Assessment identified the risk of widening health inequalities in groups who are under-represented in established youth organisations. A project group consisting of Public Health Wales, St John Ambulance Cymru, Scouts Cymru and the Army Cadets was set up using co-production principles. A competition was held with young people to design the Merit Award Badge.

The curriculum and other project materials will continue to be further developed following feedback from young people and youth leaders who complete the award as part of this pilot phase and through the phases of the evaluation.

Key challenges and risks

Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 / Duty of Quality / Duty of Candour

The introduction of the Engagement Act requires NHS bodies to report against the Duty of Candour and Duty of Quality from 1 April 2023. During 2022/23, we developed an Implementation Plan, acknowledging that the quality agenda is interdependent with our corporate governance, information governance and risk management arrangements and we are continuing to develop our integrated governance systems, processes, and culture within the organisation to align with the Act.

Putting Things Right

We welcome concerns (incidents, complaints and claims) as a way of improving the services and programmes we provide. We accept that we do not always get things right and sometimes fail to meet your expectations. When this happens we are committed to doing what we can to put things right and learn from complaints so the same thing does not happen again. As such, we have systems in place for recognising when things go wrong, investigating why problems happen and making changes if appropriate. Feedback and learning is important to us as it gives us the opportunity to improve and add to our services and programmes. Also, it is important that people feel

that they have been heard and treated with respect, and that they receive an open, honest and prompt response to their concerns. We continue to manage concerns under the NHS (Concerns, Complaints and Redress Arrangements) (Wales) Regulation 2011, commonly called 'Putting Things Right'.

In 2022-2023, we received 30 formal complaints, a reduction of 54 from 21/22 (-64%). The two most common themes were:



Communication Issues – Some examples include issues with appointment letter and Welsh Language statements



Appointments – Including dissatisfaction with appointment delays, locations, and cancellations

Learning and Areas for Improvement

Dissatisfaction with the Welsh Language sentence required and included on all screening invitation letters

The concerns were reviewed by the Welsh Language and Public Information Groups and revised wording is now being considered for organisational roll-out

A complaint was received about a screening clinic not opening on time. Staff were also waiting outside for the clinic to open due to rota confusion

Multiple rotas have been combined into a single rota so that it is clearer to see who is opening and closing each day. This action has also been implemented into other screening sites to prevent re-occurrence at another venue

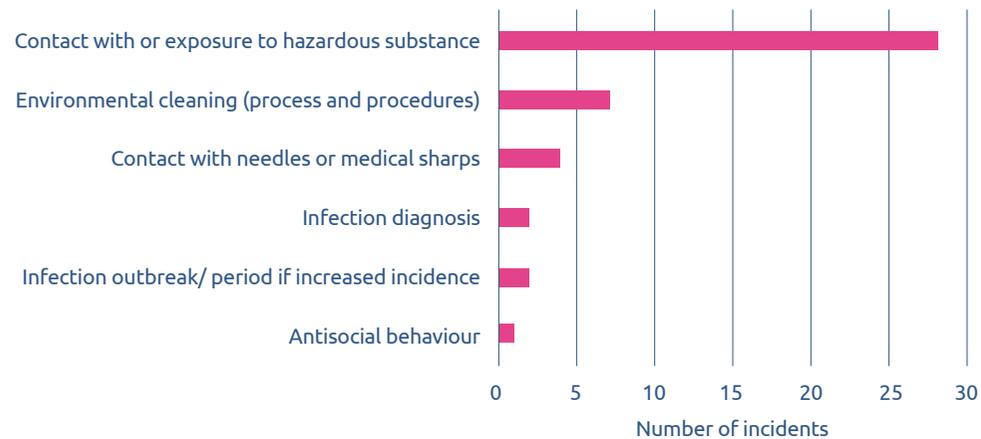
A complaint was received regarding the location and accessibility of a screening site that is not owned by Public Health Wales

Communication with service user has been improved to better prepare them for accessing the site. The site is managed by the local health board and their Estates Team are now working with us to improve signage and complete a new risk assessment for the venue

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

We reported a total of 57 infection prevention and control incidents between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. The Chart below shows the number of incidents reported in each sub-type.

Infection Prevention and Control Incident sub-types recorded on Datix (April 2022-March 2023)



Learning and Areas for Improvement

'Contact with or exposure to hazardous substances', 'contact with object or animal' and 'Needlestick injuries'

The data shows a number of incidents relate to contact with, or exposure to, hazardous substances, particularly within the Microbiology laboratories, resulting in the updating of the Sharps Injury Policy which will provide greater clarification on the types of incidents and Datix coding.

Quality and Clinical Audit

We have taken a risk-based approach to quality and clinical audit, with a 30% increase in the number of audits completed during 2022/23. There was also a 200% decrease in audits being deferred, which is a significant improvement from 2021/22. Greater emphasis and oversight will be given to the completion of audit reports in 2023-24.

	2022-23	2021-22
Completed audits	23	16
Audit report received	11	14
Number of audits deferred to next reporting year	2	6
Number of audits progressing but delayed at year-end	6	4

Based on the Audit Wales recommendations from 2021, three key improvement quality and clinical audit initiatives were developed focusing on: Quality Assurance in the Audit Process; Learning from Audits and Developing a Risk Based Approach to Audit.

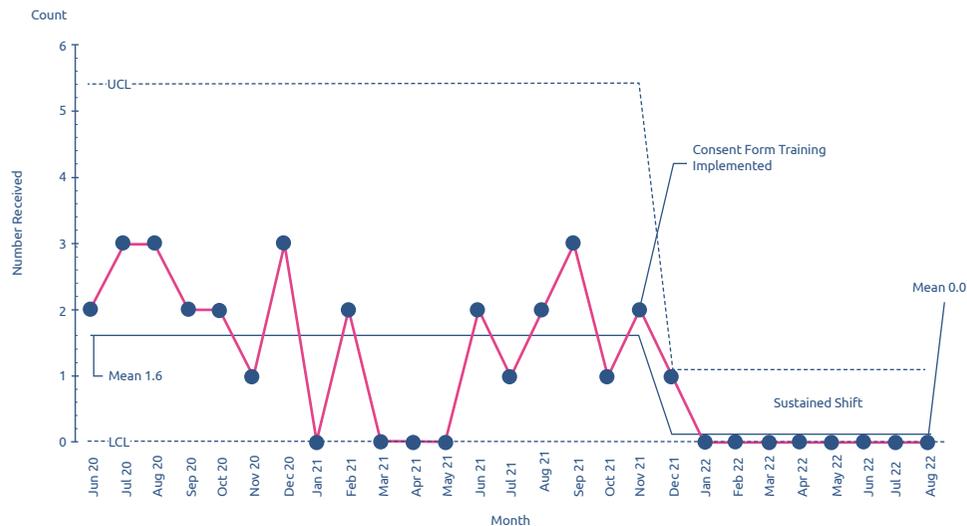


Corporate Safeguarding

Improving Consent for Public Health Wales Participants Accessing Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Who Lack Capacity

We led an innovative quality improvement project for obtaining consent for participants attending screening programmes who lacked capacity. The implementation of this process resulted in a marked reduction in complaints relating to screening being declined for participants lacking capacity.

Number of complaints received by month in Relation to obtaining Consent for those who lack capacity in screening services



The data in the chart above shows that this improved process produced a change, improving patient experience for a vulnerable client group and leading to the development of a procedure for obtaining (and recording) consent to screening which was approved by the Board.

Learning and areas for improvement:



Building key relationships with staff is critical to effective engagement.



Quality Improvement can start with a set of measures that can be built upon.



Analysis of information gives the narrative required to communicate your story.



Leading an improvement project requires sustained motivation and drive to keep on track.

7.5 Foundational economy

The foundational economy is the part of our economy that creates and distributes goods and services that we rely on for everyday life. There is a significant opportunity for the NHS to become an 'anchor institution' and positively influence the social, economic and environmental conditions in an area to support healthy and prosperous people and communities. Understanding our role in relation to this, as both the National Public Health Institute for Wales and an organisation in our own right, has been a key driver in both our Long Term Strategy and our strategic plan.

In 2022/23 we have undertaken work in support of the wider system and by embedding the foundation economy principles within our approach to value and innovation. In addition, during 2022/23 we have sought 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.



Key achievements during 2022/23 include:



We have worked with the World Health Organization to develop NHS Wales footprint analysis and inform NHS Wales' foundation economy approach.



We have undertaken a number of estates developments across Wales bringing economic benefits to the local communities and also embedding the principles of the Circular Economy in our developments. Developments include new Screening Hubs in Mountain Ash and North Cardiff and redevelopment of our North Wales estate through the Our Space 3 programme.



We have adopted a procurement approach utilising social value criteria as a part of the evaluation methodology which has resulted in us awarding contracts to a number of Welsh SME's and social enterprises.



We are actively participating in The Government's Kickstart Programme which provides funding to employers to create jobs from 16-24 years olds in receipt of universal credit, enabling young people from lesser privileged backgrounds have an opportunity to gain work-based experience.



We have recruited a number of apprentices and are further developing and improving our approach to recruiting and utilising apprentices so that our model not only provides opportunities for young people, but also builds career pipelines in some of our critical roles.



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



7.6 Sustainability

Wales is one of the only countries in the world to have pioneering legislation that requires public bodies to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

This means that Public Health Wales and other bodies have to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

This means making links between public health and the health of our planet; understanding that the climate crisis is also a health crisis, with connections to how we address poverty and inequality.

The Well-being of Future Generations Act enables us to find solutions to these challenges in a way that will deliver benefits to people's health and the environment. It will help us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. Our 'Health and Sustainability Hub' continues to support action, build capacity, inspire and educate. Additional information on our key deliverables in 2022/23 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 2023.

8. Conclusion and Forward Look

Our progress in delivering our key strategic themes in 2022/23 is a great achievement for the organisation and reflects the exceptional work of our staff in an extremely busy and challenging time in Wales. Alongside the delivery of our key priority themes for 2022/23, we have been developing our new [Long Term Strategy](#) and associated Strategic Plan, Financial Plan and Budgetary Control Framework for 2023/24. We have developed these through our integrated approach to planning, which aims to align delivery of our priorities within finance and workforce requirements. The Plan has been developed in line with our statutory requirements and Welsh Government guidance.

Our Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2026 sets out the actions that we will deliver over the first three years of our new strategy, *Working Together for a Healthier Wales 2023 – 2035*. In particular, the first year of our plan will be a year of change as we transition into the delivery of our six new strategic priorities. This will involve us demonstrating an unwavering focus on ensuring that we are deliver maximum value and impact for our population within each priority.



We know that the challenges that we face as a country are stark. The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on the people of Wales, which will continue to be felt for years to come. This includes not only the direct health impacts but also the broader and longer-term implications for our health and well-being. The pandemic has also had wider socio-economic consequences that have been felt unequally across our society and disproportionately affected those who already had the greatest health and social needs. 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 has highlighted, once again, the profound interdependence between population, societal, economic and environmental well-being. These inequalities are likely to be further negatively impacted in the coming years as a result of the current cost of living crisis. This will be a long term public health issue, which will affect the whole population and exacerbate existing health inequalities. 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 is significant and will require the collective efforts of a range of partners to address the issue over the coming years.



The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) provides the enabling legislative driver to enable us to take a long term preventative approach focused on involving the public, collaborating with our partners to deliver integrated solutions as we tackle the challenges that we face today and tomorrow

However, we have seen the power and impact that we can have when we mobilise our collective efforts and expertise. Wales has a proud history of community and collaboration. As a country, we have seen 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) provides the enabling legislative driver to enable us to take a long term preventative approach focused on involving the public, collaborating with our partners to deliver integrated solutions as we tackle the challenges that we face today and tomorrow.

In developing our new strategy, we have focused on where we, as Public Health Wales, can add most value for the people of Wales. We have 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.

We will use a range of methods and tools to support this approach. We will enable the delivery of our strategy and strategic plan through focusing on maximising the use of digital, data and evidence to improve population health, ensuring that we are delivering value and impact, making Public Health Wales a great place to work and creating the conditions so that we are able to continuously improve and learn.

As we begin to implement our strategy, we recognise that we are operating within a volatile and changing environment. We therefore need to demonstrate an ability to dynamically respond to new and emerging threats and opportunities. As a learning organisation, we will embed research and evaluation into everything we do to ensure that we are delivering maximum value and impact. This will see us prioritise those areas where we can have greatest impact and flex to respond to emerging issues.

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

9.1 An enabling framework



The Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) Act remains pivotal to helping us to work towards a Wales where all people enjoy longer, healthier lives and have fair and equal access to the **'essential conditions'** that lead to good health and well-being, now and for future generations.

The WFG Act is our framework for how we work and what we do, and as such our strategic priorities are also our well-being objectives, shaping our organisation's work going forward to 2035.

We know that a healthier and more equal Wales can only be achieved if we make progress on all seven goals. We also know that a collaborative and integrated approach to working with partners, involving citizens, which considers the long-term, with an emphasis on prevention and public health, is essential if we are to address both current and future challenges in Wales. That is why we continue to use the Act to apply a future generation 'lens' to shape what we do as an organisation and as part of the wider system to protect and improve health.

Public Health Wales continues to identify areas of our work which exemplify the sustainable development principles and where we can maximise our contribution towards the well-being goals.

Recent examples include:

- The [Welsh Health Equity Status Report Initiative](#) (WHESRi) provides an up-to-date dynamic picture of health inequities, their burden, determinants and related policies in Wales, in order to inform solutions and investment prioritisation, as well as to facilitate a joint cross-sector whole-of-government, whole-of-society policy dialogue and action towards a Healthier, More Equal and Prosperous Wales.
- The report '[Circular Economies and Sustainable Health and Well-being: The public health impact of public bodies refocusing on waste reduction and reuse in Wales](#)' details how implementing policies to reduce and re-use waste, alongside recycling schemes will have possible significant positive impacts on health and well-being for the whole population of Wales. These include contributing to tackling the climate emergency and thereby reducing air pollution, reducing risk of extreme weather events, increased sustainable production of food and improved mental health and well-being.
- For our staff, the 'Work How it Works Best' initiative takes forward the best sustainable ways of working from our past and present and co-create a great place to work and support health, well-being, welfare and resilience.
- As part of our workforce planning, we ask managers to consider long-term trends and the skills they will need for the future. We also actively manage our estates, with staff involvement, to ensure they better enable collaborative, integrated working and reduced environmental impact.
- In June 2022, the Minister for Health and Social Care launched the [Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme](#). It supports community pharmacy, dental, optometry and general practice to improve the environmental sustainability of their day-to-day practice and reach decarbonisation targets. During the first year we have seen over 100 teams register and 35 achieve an award.
- In 2022, we published a guide "[Delivering fair work for health, well-being and equity](#)" intended to support agencies in their existing efforts to improve health, well-being and equity through inclusive participation in fair work.
- In November 2022, we published a guide [Improving health and well-being: A guide to using behavioural science](#) in policy and practice in collaboration with the Centre for Behaviour Change at University College London. It is framed through the lens of the well-being goals and highlights how behavioural science can contribute to each way of working. We have also published a guide [Responding to the climate crisis: applying behavioural science](#).

In light of the challenges that Wales is facing now and in the long-term, the review of our long-term strategy in 2023 allows us to formally assess our existing priorities, including engaging with our key partners and stakeholders, to ensure that our future focus and action is having the biggest impact and delivering maximum value for the people of Wales. The WFG Act has been applied to empower our staff to help shape the development of our strategy and integrates with priorities of the wider system, to ensure it is fit for purpose and effectively addresses pressing public health challenges.

Climate change is recognised as the most significant global threat that we face and urgent action is needed to combat both the climate and nature emergencies. In response, Climate Change has been identified as a strategic priority in our revised long-term strategy and a Programme Board has been established to provide oversight and direction.



9.2 Health and Sustainability Hub (The Hub)



Set up in 2016, The Health and Sustainability Hub maximises opportunities to improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities whilst reducing our impact on the planet. The Hub supports Public Health Wales staff to maximise their contribution towards each of the national well-being goals, and in applying the five ways of working, to become an exemplar, championing and sustainable organisation.

The Hub works closely with, and in support of, the wider NHS, other public bodies and cross-sector stakeholder organisations to support system change and strengthen the impact of the Act on public health, planetary health and sustainability. In 2022/23, the Hub has focussed its work on supporting action, building capacity, inspiring and educating to empower change.

The Hub is supporting the organisation to strengthen the ways of working in line with the WFG Act. Translating the goals of the WFG Act into everyday normal practice is heavily reliant on the way we, as an organisation, develop 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.

Recent examples of some of the Hub's work in line with the Sustainable Development Principle are highlighted below. We recognise that the Five ways of working are mutually reinforcing.

9.3 Sustainable Development Principles (Five ways of working):



Involvement

The Hub coordinates the Internal [Green Advocates Network](#), established in March 2021, with now over 100 members who come together to meet for informal quarterly lunchtime sessions, enabling discussion, learning and action at an individual and team level. Recent discussions have included climate change, biodiversity, active travel and sustainable nutrition.

We are building on the knowledge of the [Climate Change and health in Wales: Views from the public](#) report to ensure we listen and learn from the population to help find acceptable effective solutions.

We have developed 'Resources for Sustainable Health' e-catalogue bringing together the range of online resources and toolkits produced by the Hub aimed at engaging, inspiring and helping organisations and individuals to consider the natural environment and the health of the planet and people in everything they do.



Collaboration

We continue to work in partnership with internal and external partners to help us harness a collective benefit in delivering the well-being objectives.

We continue to share learning within our partnerships such as with Welsh Government, The Future Generations Office, Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Green Health Wales, public health teams and Health Boards, Sustainable Development Coordinators Cymru Plus (SDCC+), Sustrans, Cardiff University and Faculty of Public Health and more.

The Hub is collaborating with staff exploring how the Sustainable Development Principle can enable individuals, teams and the organisation to interpret the ways of working so that they are "real" in their everyday work and thinking and are connected to the definitions in the legislation.



Prevention

To prevent long-term challenges such as climate change getting worse, the Hub has contributed to the development of the Climate Change strategic priority.

The Hub has been supporting progress against the charter commitments including promoting active and sustainable travel as part of the [Healthy Travel Charter](#) Day in September 2022.

Over the last three years Public Health Wales has:

- Promoted our cycle to work scheme and healthy travel options to all staff.
- Put in place cycle-friendly facilities such as storage and showers.
- Supported agile working.
- Installed eight electric vehicle charging points across Wales.
- Explored low emission vehicles for our fleet and public transport discounts.
- We're also establishing a network of Healthy Travel champions to help us promote healthy travel across Wales.

Inspired by Wales' well-being goals, the "[Be the Change](#)" toolkit for public bodies and a series of e-guides provides sustainable steps that all staff can do, regardless of role. These aim to encourage individuals and teams to embrace ways of working and living that will improve health and well-being, reduce emissions and waste, tackle climate change and improve our lives now, and the lives of future generations.

The Hub has developed a package of options for training and capacity building opportunities to engage Public Health Wales colleagues to support awareness and understanding of climate change, sustainability and reducing emissions. This highlights simple actions everyone can take, to prevent problems occurring in the future or getting worse.



Integration

Given the climate crisis we are facing, and the interconnections between planetary and human health, the Hub has been supporting a range of activities to progress Public Health Wales's work on decarbonisation.

We have supported the development of the [Public Health Wales's Decarbonisation Action Plan](#) and created a [Cutting your carbon emissions](#) infographic to highlight how people can take actions to reduce carbon emissions in work and at home.

In 2023, we have published an updated Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty Report outlining the steps Public Health Wales is taking to promote biodiversity, highlighting progress made between 2019 and 2022 including against actions identified in our Biodiversity Action Plan, Making Space for Nature.

Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have recently re-established a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) originally signed in 2020. It will add value to existing ways of working and support a joint approach to the delivery of biodiversity targets. It will ensure that people's health is considered in NRW's work looking after Wales's environment and equally, natural resources are understood and considered in Public Health Wales' decisions and developments.



Long-Term

The Hub champions sustainability to ensure that together we can reduce and mitigate the climate change effects on social and environmental determinants of health now and in the long-term.

The Hub continues to support teams within Public Health Wales to use the [SIFT Healthy Environment](#) workshop, which supports team planning to identify and reduce negative impacts on the environment and climate change.

To support the Decarbonisation agenda, the Hub secured Welsh Government funding to undertake a research project to reduce single use plastics, high waste streams, PPE and associated emissions within Public Health Wales' laboratories, with a focus on the Microbiology Service area.

The Health and Sustainability Hub have been working with external environmental consultants to calculate the carbon footprint for 2020/2021 as part of a wider research project to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Public Health Wales' Carbon Footprint.

9.4 Next Steps

Public Health Wales continues to work to embed the culture change required to implement the Act successfully. We have identified further opportunities to increase awareness and understanding of individuals and team roles and contributions to the Act; strengthening our multi-agency working to develop longer term, collaborative projects and focusing on health inequalities, and the social, cultural and economic aspects of sustainability, whilst continuing our work on environmental sustainability.

Further information on the Health and Sustainability Hub including additional resources is available at: <https://phwwhocc.co.uk/teams/health-and-sustainability-hub/>

