

# Chief Executive Board Report November 2025

## 1 Exercise Pegasus

Exercise PEGASUS was the UK's largest pandemic preparedness simulation in nearly a decade, commissioned as a Tier 1 national exercise by the Department of Health and Social Care in England and delivered by UKHSA under the direction of the National Security Council (Resilience).

Its overarching aim was to assess critical elements of the UK's preparedness, capabilities, and response arrangements for a pandemic arising from a novel infectious disease. The exercise was structured into three phases - Emergence, Containment, and Mitigation; each designed to replicate the evolving complexity of a real pandemic scenario.

Objectives included testing decision-making processes, evaluating coordination across national and devolved administrations, assessing health inequalities, and examining scalability of response capabilities.

### 1.1 Engagement and Initial Learning

We played an active role in the Exercise, engaging strategically and tactically across Welsh Government, UKHSA, and Local Resilience Fora structures. Our own objectives focused on supporting Welsh Government decision-making, advising on public health measures, and validating its own pandemic response arrangements.

Initial learning highlighted strengths in activating our internal Strategic and Tactical Response Groups, maintaining situational awareness, and leveraging surveillance frameworks. However, challenges emerged around interoperability and the integration of data systems. Early improvement ideas include clarifying response triggers, mapping our cells to UK structures, modernising digital infrastructure for real-time data sharing, and embedding enduring governance models.

### 1.2 Next Steps and Future Programme

The next steps for us include updating and finalising our pandemic response arrangements in quarter four of 2025/2026, informed by lessons from Exercise PEGASUS and subsequent internal launch through Exercise ANADL that we conducted in March 2026.

Nationally, a structured debriefing programme will run through late 2025 and into 2026, culminating in a comprehensive UK-wide report scheduled for publication in winter 2026. This report will consolidate findings from all phases, including a planned recovery-focused phase in summer 2026, and set out recommendations to strengthen resilience across health systems and civil contingencies.

For us, these outputs will underpin refinements in governance, interoperability and equity considerations, ensuring Wales is better prepared for future pandemics and all threats.

## **2 Meeting with Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care**

On the 21 October we had one of our quarterly meetings with Jeremy Miles MS, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care. This was a very constructive meeting and, together with Pippa Britton, chairperson, and Professor Fu-Meng Khaw, National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services/Medical Director, we covered the following areas:

- Health protection and screening services
- Winter planning and preparedness
- Supporting 'Improving Together: Priority Delivery Actions for Better Health and Care'
- International health and the World Health Organization.

## **3 Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee**

The Public Accounts and Public Administration Senedd Committee has taken over the work of the recently disbanded Covid-19 Special Purpose Committee, whose purpose was to consider the reports published by UK Covid-19 Inquiry and to any gaps identified in the preparedness and response of the Welsh Government and other Welsh public bodies during the Covid-19 pandemic that should be subject to further examination. The Committee was to take evidence on the identified gaps and publish reports and recommendations.

The Public Accounts and Public Administration Committee is now undertaking this work, focusing on the Module 1 report on Resilience and Preparedness published by the UK COVID-19 Inquiry and the gaps identified by the previous committee.

Public Health Wales was invited to attend a committee session on the 12 November 2025 to give evidence on the functionality of official structures, decision making and the clarity of roles and responsibilities following the pandemic, and any other related matters of relevance. Joining me in attendance were Professor Fu-Meng Khaw and Dr Chris Williams, Consultant Epidemiologist and Head of our Communicable Disease Surveillance Unit.

The Committee's role following the publication of the Module 2, A, B and C report is not yet known. Further updates will be provided in due course.

## **4 Update on the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry**

The UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry continues to hear evidence in its last remaining modules with public hearings are due to end in March 2026. Our input into the Inquiry has significantly reduced since the summer.

The Module 8, Children and Young People, public hearings took place between September and October, hearing evidence on the impact of the pandemic on children and young people. We supported the Inquiry with its evidence gathering in this module but did not give oral evidence at the public hearings.

The next public hearing to take place is in Module 9, Economic Response, and these hearings begin on the 24 November 2025. We have not been involved with this module. The Inquiry's final module, Module 10, Impact on Society, will commence its public hearings in February 2026. Again, Public Health Wales has not been involved in this module to date.

On the 20 November 2025, the Inquiry will publish its second report in Modules 2, A, B and C, which focuses on UK (and all four nation governments) decision-making and political governance. We will attend the report publication event and arrangements have been put in place to update colleagues on the report's contents and any potential media responses, ahead of publication. Reports for Modules 3, 4 and 5 are due to be published in Spring/Summer 2026.

We will verbally update the Board in relation to the Module 2 report and will subsequently bring a summary of the findings, recommendations and how they relate to us at a future Board meeting.

## **5 Meeting of the Chief Executives of the UK Public Health Agencies**

On the 30 September, we had an extended meeting of the Chief Executives of the four UK Public Health Agencies. We meet quarterly for a limited time, and this was our annual face to face meeting.

This was a very constructive meeting involving our respective colleagues from the organisations who joined for various items. The agenda covered updates from each nation and thematic discussions on economic inactivity, all threats planning and exercising, healthy weight, gambling harms and future projections to 2050.

## **6 Welsh Public Health Conference**

On the 22 October 2025, around 400 delegates joined us for the Welsh Public Health Conference in Glamorgan Cricket Ground, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff.

Partners from the public, private, academic and third sectors joined us for our flagship event, which made its return for the first time since 2019.

The theme was '**Action today, for a healthier nation tomorrow**', and we were proud to kick off our conference with an inspiring creative piece from Duke AI, spoken word poet and artist Dom Tsoi, bringing the themes of prevention and fairness to life.

We were also joined by Monika Kosinska from the World Health Organization (WHO), who shared insights into the commercial determinants of health, Sarah Murphy MS, Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing, who reiterated the importance of prevention to the Welsh Government and Wales, and an inspiring

panel of young people discussing the importance of involving young people in public health decisions.

Workshops and lightning talks led by Public Health Wales members of staff and other partners, throughout the day explored health inequalities, the wider determinants of health, mental and social wellbeing and climate action.

It was a wonderful day with an excellent vibe and a lot of energised people. I would like to thank our communications team for organising and delivering an excellent event, and to all our people, partners and the Minister for the excellent content that made the day.

## **7 Gender Equity and the Well-being Economy**

On the 2 October 2025, we held a webinar '*Shaping a Fairer Future: Gender, Equity, and the Well-Being Economy*', with 36 participants and representation from Scotland, Iceland, Finland and Ireland and the WHO European Office.

This webinar explored the strategic intersection of Gender Equity and the Well-being Economy through a virtual roundtable format. Opened by Sarah Murphy MS, Minister for Mental Health and Well-being, the session marked a key milestone in delivering on the Memorandum of Understanding between the Welsh Government and the WHO Regional Office for Europe. It also directly supported the ambitions of *The Women's Health Plan for Wales*, reinforcing the Government's commitment to embedding gender equity within public health and economic policy.

The webinar convened high-level stakeholders from across leading Well-being Economy nations, representing public health, economics and policy sectors. The discussion focused on identifying actionable levers for change, with areas of exploration including:

- gender Pay Gap and Gender Budgeting
- gender-transformative policymaking
- workforce and career progression through a gender lens
- young people and mental health impacts
- gender-based violence
- data and evidence, including insights from the second WHO Health Equity Status Report Initiative.

This strategic dialogue aimed to inform future policy development, foster cross-sector collaboration and ensure that gender equity remains central to Wales' evolving Well-being Economy framework.

## **8 Scheme of Delegation**

On the 15 October, the Executive Team approved an updated version of the Scheme of Delegation and Reservation of Powers. The Scheme of Delegation and Reservation of Powers outlines, in detail, the provisions for decision-making across Public Health Wales and is a key component of the organisation's operating

framework. It describes the flow of assurance from the Board through to the Executive Team members, explaining how the Chief Executive, through their role as Accountable Officer, has delegated accountabilities to the respective executive leads.

The updated version can be viewed on the Public Health Wales [staff intranet pages](#) with additional signposting to supporting guidance pages, policies and procedures. The Scheme of Delegation will operate as a living document, with any amendments made as and when required. The Scheme of Delegation will be reviewed annually, alongside the review of Standing Orders. Any in-year adjustments will be reported to Business Executive Team by exception on a quarterly basis.

## **9 Making Every Contact Count: New Performance Dashboard**

We have launched an interactive Making Every Contact Count (MECC) Performance Monitoring Dashboard to support national and local partners in delivering MECC across Wales.

The dashboard provides information on the uptake of MECC training and trends over time by professional role, organisation and geographical area. The data is provided on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

Recognising the range of professionals interacting with members of the public every day, MECC e-module training is available to those working in public-facing roles in the NHS, local authorities, other public sector bodies such as the fire and rescue services, as well as academia and third sector organisations.

The dashboard will enable stakeholders, including regional MECC leads within Health Boards and Allied Health Professional national leads, to assess the uptake of training. This will help and support the national programme and partners across Wales to target and promote the training with specific professional groups within their organisation. This will support quality improvement initiatives to embed MECC and its role in supporting the wider prevention agenda across organisations and professional groups.

The MECC Level 1 e-learning module provides practical advice about how to carry out opportunistic chats with patients or clients, signpost to other services and encourage people to make positive steps towards healthy behaviours.

The latest data shows that the MECC Level 1 e-learning module has been completed by 21,094 participants since its launch in 2017/2018. A total of 2,672 participants completed the Level 1 training in 2024/25.

A new MECC Level 2 e-learning module will be launched in December 2025. It is designed to develop skills and confidence of staff further to facilitate more effective health behaviour change conversations with patients.

To access the MECC dashboard please email our MECC Team on [Publichealthwales.MECC@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Publichealthwales.MECC@wales.nhs.uk).

More information on MECC and access to e-modules can be found [here](#).

## **10 Silver Award in the CIPR Pride Awards**

We have been awarded a Silver Award in the Stakeholder and Community Relations category at the CIPR Pride Awards for the Tackling Diabetes Together South Wales hackathon. This recognition reflects the organisation's innovative approach to engagement, bringing together the healthcare system and people with or affected by diabetes to gain vital insights into service improvement. The insights gathered, combined with broader research and collaboration, have strengthened the organisation's ability to empower people with diabetes to self-manage their condition, which is known to lead to better health outcomes. Huge congratulations to the team for an excellent event and wonderful to see the recognition with the award – well done!

Building on this work, our communications team secured significant media coverage on BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Cymru on the 11 November, reaching the Welsh public with crucial messages about diabetes care. The coverage featured live interviews and a powerful patient advocate, Binky Thomas (who was first met at the hackathon), who shared her experience of managing type 2 diabetes. The broadcast highlighted the importance of early support at diagnosis and the entitlement to eight care processes, including annual foot checks.

The media coverage communicated our four new initiatives developed in response to research commissioned under *Tackling Diabetes Together*: a new digital hub, enhanced GP and nurse resources, improvements to the NHS Wales app, and expanded peer support groups. These initiatives address the needs identified by 50 people with type 2 diabetes and 15 healthcare professionals, recognising that over 220,000 people in Wales live with diabetes and make around 180 daily decisions about managing their condition. The goal is to provide support that fits into daily life and empowers people from diagnosis to live longer, healthier lives.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to receive this information.

**Tracey Cooper**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**