

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

**29 July 2021**

### **1 Developing a Sustainable Health Protection Response Model for COVID-19 and Beyond**

On the 1 June, we began the gradual mobilisation of staff back to their core roles to achieve the reactivation of our core and statutory public health functions. At that time, the incidence of COVID-19 was beginning to rise as a result of the continued transmission of the delta variant. Consequently, the number of incidents and outbreaks requiring input from our health protection response teams increased.

Recognising the changing context, particularly where most of the adult population in Wales are doubly-vaccinated, our response to such incidents and outbreaks needs to be proportionate to the risk. Accordingly, our strategy to control transmission is not to contain individual cases where there is evidence of community transmission, but to take a risk-assessed approach particularly for high-risk settings.

On the 5 July, we implemented a revised operating model for our contribution to the COVID-19 response. The new model introduced two key changes to the provision of specialist advice.

A national All-Wales centralised team has been established to provide advice and support to members of the public and professionals, incorporating the National Call Centre (NCC) and the National Health Protection Response Centre (NHPRC) into a single 'COVID-AWARE' response team, which includes health protection consultants and practitioners.

At a regional level (seven health board footprint), a named consultant and practitioner will remain as key local contacts for the local health protection system. Mutual aid cover is organised on a three-region footprint.

The changes are intended to be an interim measure while the recruitment continues for additional staff to join the health protection team, which will be largely complete by October 2021.

The changes were made at pace and although stakeholders were given advance notification, many of their staff working at an operational level were not aware until after the new operating model was implemented. Early

feedback from partners has identified areas of response requiring clarification on roles and responsibilities. An immediate priority is to review the management of COVID-19 incidents and outbreaks in residential care homes. Work on this was initiated on the 19 July with a meeting with Directors of Public Health, Local Public Health and Health Protection Teams, Directors of Public Protection, Welsh Government and Public Health Wales.

Looking ahead, a system-wide review is required for response partners to agree the roles and responsibilities for health protection response at a local, regional and national level, with adequate distribution of resource. We are coordinating two key learning events over the coming months to help inform the system redesign, one with local authorities to consider how we can work together to build healthy and sustainable communities by taking a public health approach to recovery, and the second being a whole system 'Learning from COVID-19 and Pandemic Preparedness Summit'.

## **2 Meeting with Minister for Health and Social Services and the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Well-being**

The Chairperson and I met with the Minister for Health and Social Services, and the Director General for Health and Social Services/NHS Wales Chief Executive, on the 13 July as an introductory meeting with the Minister. This was a positive and constructive meeting during which we took the opportunity to update the Minister on the work of Public Health Wales and discussed with her the COVID-19 health protection response, the broader population health harms including the Welsh Health Equity Status report Initiative and the shift to prevention to transform health in Wales.

The Chairperson and I also met with the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Well-being on the 28 June 2021 to discuss the work of the organisation in these areas and on the 22 June, Julie Bishop, our Director of Health Improvement, and I also met with the Deputy Minister to discuss the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes. Both meetings were extremely constructive and helpful to talk through the Deputy Minister's focus on children and young people and mental health and well-being more generally.

## **3 Joint Executive Team End of Year Accountability Review**

On the 1 July 2021, the Executive Team had the 2020/2021 end of year Public Health Wales accountability meeting with the Welsh Government Director General for Health and Social Services/NHS Wales Chief Executive and his Executive Team. Given the unique nature of the last year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we submitted extensive documentation in advance of the meeting and the summary slide pack is attached as appendix 1 for information.

This was a comprehensive, positive and constructive meeting which spanned the significant role that Public Health Wales played during the year to protect the people of Wales and recognised the pivotal role that the whole organisation has played in the health protection response, providing information to the public, supporting partners in health, social care and local Government and advising and supporting Ministers and the Welsh Government across the breadth of challenges that COVID-10 has brought.

#### **4 Update on the Executive Team**

There are a number of changes taking place within our Executive Team and these are as follows.

- ❖ I would like to welcome Iain Bell, who joined us as our new *National Director of Public Health Knowledge and Research* on the 12 July from the Office for National Statistics, where he was the Deputy Chief Statistician and Director General for Population and Public Policy.
- ❖ Following an internal expression of interest process, Sally Attwood (formerly Deputy Director of Strategic Planning and Performance) has joined the Executive Team as *Transitional Director for Health and Well-being* from the 1 July. Sally's new role will lead the operational and day-to-day activities of our Health and Well-being Directorate and will support our staff in the Directorate as it transitions into the new combined Directorate with our World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre on Investment for Health and Well-being over the coming months.
- ❖ On the 2 June 2021, the Remuneration and Terms of Service Board Committee approved the position of *Director of Policy and International Health/Director of the WHO Collaborating Centre* as an Executive Board position on the 2 June 2021. This means the Professor Mark Bellis will now formally join the Board in an Executive Board position. This replaces the Executive Board post that had been previously allocated to the Director of Health and Well-being role.

#### **5 Investment in our Breast Test Wales Screening Programmes**

We are pleased that Welsh Government has recently confirmed funding for replacement of the equipment for provision of the breast screening programme. There will be an investment of over £7.8 million over the next two years and this includes the imaging equipment and replacement mobiles.

This investment will ensure that Breast Test Wales can continue to offer a high quality breast screening service using up to date imaging equipment and quality facilities. This will enable our staff to continue to offer this important service in Wales as locally as possible and on high quality

equipment. The replacement will be undertaken in a staged and co-ordinated approach to ensure it supports the recovery of programme due to the impact of the pandemic and disruption is as minimal as possible.

## **6 Review of our Long Term Strategy**

The current Long Term Strategy was developed during 2017/2018 following an extensive and inclusive process. It spans 2018 – 2030 and contains seven strategic priorities that have given effect to the organisation's Strategic Plan (three-year plan) and the Annual Plans up to 2020/2021 when the organisation's response to the coronavirus pandemic required us to re-prioritise our work, workforce and resources.

During 2020, given the substantial and significant challenges that coronavirus has brought to the organisation and the nation, the Board made the decision to undertake a review of our Long Term Strategy during 2021/2022 in order to re-assess our priorities to transform health in Wales over the coming years.

To begin the process, the Board held a workshop on the 24 June 2021 as part of our long-term strategy review. The strategy review will be informed by a number of key drivers including a review of the evidence, feedback from stakeholders and staff and the recently published Programme for Government. The workshop provided an opportunity for the Board to discuss the strategic opportunities and challenges facing us as we continue through and beyond the pandemic, and the potential impact these have on Wales and our existing strategy.

The process of evidence review and engagement with our staff and stakeholders will take place over the next few months with the intention of completing and approving a new, revised Long Term Strategy by the end of March 2022.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to receive this information.

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