

Vaughan Gething
Minister for Health & Social Services
Welsh Government

20th December 2019

Dear Minister,

We have pleasure in enclosing a copy of the Final Draft of the 10-year Workforce Strategy, '*A Healthier Wales: Our Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care*'. This final draft was approved by the Social Care Wales Board (SCW) on 12th December 2019 and by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) Board on 19th December 2019.

The strategy sets out the vision, ambition and approaches that are needed to put wellbeing at the heart of our plans for the workforce, reflecting a core element of the Parliamentary Review and A Healthier Wales' '*Quadruple Aim*' to deliver an inclusive, engaged, sustainable, flexible and responsive workforce to deliver excellent health and social care services. We recognise this is an ambitious strategy.

The Strategy is grounded in the legislative frameworks of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. It takes on board the evidence and key messages from the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales (2018) and your strategic policy document '*A Healthier Wales*', through which our organisations were commissioned jointly to lead the development of this Strategy. The strategy is not limited to those roles and teams that operate at the interface of health and social care but about the whole workforce, including support for volunteers and unpaid carers, who are fundamental to success.

The development of the Strategy has been overseen by a steering group jointly chaired by SCW and HEIW, with representatives from the Association of Directors of Social Services, NHS Workforce & Organisational Development Directors, and your officials as standing members.

This final draft represents the culmination of over a year's work by both organisations and is one of the largest engagement exercises undertaken in Wales' health and social care workforce arena. The year-long programme commenced with extensive engagement involving well over 1,000 people, which helped shape the content of a public consultation document released in summer 2019. During the consultation

period, we continued to engage with stakeholders to draw in their views through webinars, online surveys, attending networks and meetings and speaking at conferences. We received 200 formal responses, in addition to the feedback provided at events. In all, we estimate that around 1,900 people including staff, professional bodies and trade unions, employers, careers, patients, people who access care and support, third sector organisations, commissioners and volunteers helped to shape this Strategy, with the overwhelming majority in favour of the ambition, themes and approach proposed.

We have identified in the draft Strategy 7 core themes with 32 actions which focus on the first 3 years of the strategy with wellbeing of staff as the golden thread that runs throughout, in line with 'A Healthier Wales' and your commitment to the Quadruple Aim. We have made it clear that we expect the Welsh language and inclusion to be woven into all areas of the implementation, in addition to identifying some specific actions within the Strategy.

We believe that 32 key actions we have identified are the right ones to deliver the 2030 ambition of '*a motivated, engaged, sustainable and flexible workforce in health and social care*'. The majority of the actions were tested in the public consultation document and attracted a strong degree of consensus. This was in large part because we had listened to what people told us they wanted from the Strategy as well as basing our ideas on reviews of recent literature, good practice and innovation, workforce intelligence, workforce trends and the workforce implications of national legislation and policy.

Some of what is proposed in this Strategy is already underway, as issues have been recognised and positive action taken, for example the leadership actions commenced in February 2019. Some of the actions we propose in this Strategy are radical, for example introducing a 'staff governance' framework (Action 2), Working towards fair reward and recognition across the health and social care workforce (Action 3), developing a strategy to frame a consistent approach to compassionate leadership (Action 25) and establishing a centre of excellence for workforce intelligence (Action 28), others build on current practice and do some of the things we currently do much better to address our workforce issues and challenges. Our recommendation is that there should be a review and refresh of these actions at year 3 and year 6, so that we are continually learning and build on these actions and can ensure this Strategy remains live in the ever-changing environment of health and social care in Wales.

It has not been possible to include everything in this Strategy in detail. The rich material and body of evidence, including operational actions, we have received from contributors will support the development of the implementation plans, and will be made available to whoever Welsh Government commissions to lead on implementation.

During the project, we have highlighted at various stages, the emerging feedback regarding value of the workforce and parity of esteem. This has been the most frequently raised issue predominantly, but not exclusively restricted to social care contributors and not limited to terms and conditions of employment. Our Boards have considered the wording of Action 3 relating to parity which reads ‘Work towards fair reward and recognition...’ and, coupled with the strength of views from respondents have asked that you consider committing to ‘Achieve fair and consistent reward..’ or ‘Implement fair and consistent reward...’. We recognise that this is a policy matter and one on which you will need to take a view (A Fairer Wales).

We also highlighted to your officials where there will be a need for a policy view on implementation. We have been advised that discussions have taken place with special advisors. These include the enablers e.g. terms and conditions and commissioning practices, as well as increasing and equalising Continuous Professional Development across professions.

We are firmly of the view that there needs to be a single national mechanism for holding the ring on the development and delivery of the implementation plans. We would welcome clarification of your intentions regarding publication of the Strategy and implementation – especially as regards timescales and leadership of the delivery. There is clearly a pressing need to take action and an urgency to this agenda, and so whilst we are concerned about the longer term we also see the need for short term actions, as set out in the Strategy. This is the first workforce strategy for health and social care in Wales and a key enabler for the delivery of ‘*A Healthier Wales*’. Having built up a sense of expectation with partners through the engagement it is important that momentum isn’t lost. A significant delay in publication or a lack of clarity on ownership of actions and arrangements for holding to account those responsible for delivery would be disappointing at best but potentially damaging given the widespread interest and anticipation for this strategy, in line with the other UK nations, who are progressing their workforce strategies at pace. There would be a need for an agreed communication strategy and we would expect to see the strategy published in different formats to recognise the breadth of audience this will need to reach. This represents an opportunity to use the strategy as an enabler to achieve ‘*A Healthier Wales*’ ambitions of seamless care and true integration of services.

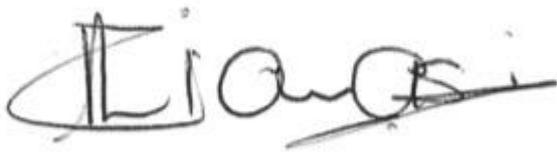
This strategy represents a significant shift in the emphasis and approach to the planning, recruitment, development and leadership of the workforce. This in part can be supported by re purposing existing resources, but without specific resources to underpin implementation the ambition set out in the strategy will not be realised. We strongly recommend you consider establishing a workforce transformation fund to support implementation.

We are enormously grateful to everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategy, and we are extremely proud of the progress we have made together. It has

been an extremely complex piece of work and it is a credit to our organisations that we have delivered such a collaborative draft and on time. We will be writing to our stakeholders and partners to thank them, as well as to Keith Moultrie, Institute of Public Care to acknowledge their support for the engagement phases. The Steering Group will be stood down following a lesson learned exercise and the project will be closed down in January.

We would be happy to advise further on implementation of this Workforce Strategy and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Giannasi". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mick Giannasi
Chair SCW

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Jones". The signature is very stylized and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Dr Chris Jones
Chair HEIW

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sue Evans". The signature is cursive and clear.

Sue Evans
CEO SCW

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alexandra Howells". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

Alexandra Howells
CEO HEIW