

Board briefing May 2024

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Here is a summary of our latest Social Care Wales Board meeting.

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Here is a summary of our latest Social Care Wales Board meeting.

Key items for discussion, decision and action

The most recent meeting of the Board was held both in-person and remotely via Zoom on 2 May 2024.

The following key items of business were conducted:

- chairs provided a brief summary of the key issues which were discussed during the December round of committee meetings and highlighted areas where they had gained assurance or identified matters requiring the attention of the full Board,
- the Chief Executive set the context for the meeting focusing particularly on the continuing pressures within the health and social care system and current progress on the development of the National Office and the National Commissioning Framework,
- the Board received an update on the development of the Annual Business Plan and Annual Budget for 2024 to 2025 previously approved by Board,
- the Board scrutinised the quarter four Progress Report against the 2023 to 2024 Business Plan. Members gained assurance that the plan was largely on track and that where there was slippage, the reasons were understood and appropriate remedial action was being taken,
- the Board undertook the annual review of the Risk Register and gained assurance that the organisation has systems in place to manage risks appropriately in accordance with the agreed risk appetite,
- Social Care Wales's committees structure and terms of reference were approved. The Chair's Co-ordinating Group was highlighted as a forum for

committee chairs to meet with the Chief Executive and Board Secretary to ensure that the organisation's meeting processes are cohesive and effectively co-ordinated,

- the Board discussed the Annual Review of Board and Committee Effectiveness for 2023/24 and agreed a series of follow up actions to be incorporated into the rolling Strengthening Governance Action Plan,
- the Board noted the synopsis of recent Strategic Development Sessions which was added to the papers as a public record of Members learning and development activities between Board meetings.

If you would like to know more about any of these issues, take a look at the [Board materials](#)

Emerging issues

Whilst reviewing the rolling action log, the Board held a discussion about the organisation's longer-term financial strategy and the need to consider how the exponential growth in the registration process is adequately funded going forward.

Officers confirmed that registration fees were currently being discussed at a UK level, with a number of regulators launching consultations about increasing fees during 2024 to 2025. Members agreed that a longer-term strategy was needed to consolidate the future funding of the organisation (whether that be by way of fee increases or other means) and asked that a range of different funding scenarios be brought forward for the Board to consider.

Members asked that data from other UK regulators was presented for comparison and agreed that a detailed review was required to establish a clear strategic position on fees that takes account of financial pressures on

registered workers; employers and the organisation. Officers reassured the Board that a three-year budget strategy was underway and will be used as the basis to inform future funding requirements. Some emerging options would be discussed later in the agenda. Officers agreed to add this to the agenda for the autumn 2024 Strategic Development Session.

Spotlight on...

Delivery against the Business Plan

The Board scrutinised progress against the 2023 to 2024 Business Plan for quarter four and were pleased to note that 83 per cent of the 103 actions contained within the plan were on track. Members received exception reports against those areas that were not on track explaining what remedial action was being taken.

In scrutinising the Human Resources report, members asked that officers ensure that data in relation to the completion of a safeguarding module be included within the reporting of mandatory training compliance and that an update on the overall training completion rates for all staff be provided at the Board meeting in July.

Improved well-being for the social care and early years workforce

Members were pleased to learn that the fitness to practise counselling support service was now well-established and that officers were monitoring engagement to ensure that the service was being used in appropriate circumstances. Members also sought and received assurance that the organisation was making full use of its networks to promote the online

communities that had been established.

The Board reflected on the success of the 2024 Accolades ceremony and noted that a more detailed evaluation of the event would be presented at the Board meeting in July. Members also heard that the winner of the Caring in Welsh award, which is decided by a public vote, will be announced during the Eisteddfod in August.

Members discussed the digital social care worker card and noted that revised terminology was now being used to define key performance indicators relating to the uptake of the card. Officers advised that they would be reviewing the benefits associated with the card later in the financial year.

Members noted that the new, streamlined [WeCare Wales](#) website was launched in March 2024. The system has improved links to the customer relationship management (CRM) system which enable more meaningful analysis of employer use the impact of the jobs portal. Officers confirmed that they were working with stakeholders to promote the changes, to gather feedback about the use of the improved analytical capability.

Members were also pleased to note that there had been an improvement in the uptake of bursaries for 2023 to 2024 and that officers were working with Welsh Government and employers to create an appropriate balance between direct entry, 'grow your own' schemes and other routes to becoming qualified social workers.

A registered social care workforce that has the public's confidence

Members noted that performance metrics relating to the organisation's regulatory functions are regularly scrutinised by the Regulation and Standards Committee. The Chair of the Committee reported pleasing improvements in performance in a number of areas. However, performance in relation to the number of historical cases remained stubbornly challenging. The Chair advised Members that he and the Registrar had recently met with the four Police and Crime Commissioners for Wales to discuss ways in which timescales could be reduced in cases where there were related criminal proceedings.

Members also scrutinised the recently published Omnibus Survey results and asked whether further work was needed to address the misalignment between the positive public perception of social workers and the extent to which social workers feel valued. Officers confirmed that a new standardised set of wellbeing questions had been developed to form part of the next workforce survey and it was hoped that this would provide clearer insights into the reasons why social workers felt undervalued.

Board news

Following an extensive public appointments process, the Minister for Social Care has recently appointed 11 new members to the Board to replace members who have now or will shortly have served their full term of office.

Six new members joined the Board on 1 April 2024 and five more will take up their posts in April 2025. The members who joined in April 2024 are:

Aaron Edwards

Aaron is the TEC Cymru Telecare Programme's National Programme Manager. As a fervent advocate for technology-enabled care, Aaron proudly champions its potential to enhance safety for people who need additional support, so they can keep their autonomy in their living environment.

Abyd Quinn Aziz

Abyd is a Reader in Social Work at Cardiff University, a role which he has fulfilled for 20 years. For 25 years prior to that, he was an independent social worker, working in children's social care and mental health and coordinating training in childcare, child protection and management development.

Einir Hinson

Einir is a qualified social worker. She currently manages the Lifespan Integrated Disability Service, which is provided by Conwy County Borough Council to offer care and support to adults with disabilities and their families.

Kieran Harris

Kieran has almost 15 years' operational experience in a range of charities providing care and support in Wales and across the UK. Kieran is currently Head of Health and Social Care at WCVA where he supports the third sector with providing health, care and well-being services.

Mark Roderick

In 2023, Mark was part of the 'Experts by Experience' panel at our Celebrating Social Work conferences. He hopes to bring a different perspective to our Board and influence positive change for the benefit of the wider national community.

Sarah Zahid

Sarah is the Responsible Individual and registered manager of a nursing home in Conwy. She has direct experience in providing and managing regulated services, making sure each person lives a life that's important to them.

One more member needs to be recruited to bring the Board up to full establishment and we are seeking someone with experience of managing statutory social care services at head of service or equivalent level in a local authority setting. A selection process will commence in autumn 2024 with a view to the successful candidate taking up their post in April 2025, subject to Ministerial approval.

You can read more about our [Board members](#) on our website.

Next Board meeting: 18 July 2024

The next public Board Meeting will be held in Flintshire on 18 July 2024. The following items are currently scheduled for discussion:

- Update from committee chairs
- Context setting and key messages from the Chief Executive

- Business Plan quarter 1 progress report
- Consultation on the codes, practice guidance and fitness to practise principles
- Equal pay audit 2023 to 2024
- Annual equality report 2023 to 2024
- Impact report 2023 to 2024
- Board listening exercise feedback
- Board development synopsis
- Meeting effectiveness

Image of train in the mountains

Up next

Over the next two years, the Board will be going out to the seven Regional Partnership Board areas of Wales to hold its public meetings in local communities. This will enable the Board to engage in two-way dialogue with the sector and allow new Board members to gel together as a team.

Local authorities have offered to host the Board with the first of these due to be held in Flintshire in July 2024 followed by Powys in October 2024.

Looking forward, other events in the Board calendar are:

13 June - Board Strategic Development Session

17 to 20 June - Committee meetings

18 July - Public Board Meeting and Strategic Development Session in Flintshire

3 to 10 August - National Eisteddfod Caring in Welsh award

16 to 19 September - Committee meetings

October 2024 – Public Board Meeting and Strategic Development Session in Powys

December 2024 - Committee meetings

February 2025 – Public Board Meeting and Strategic Development Session in Pembrokeshire

March 2025 - Committee meetings

May 2025 – Public Board Meeting and Strategic Development Session in Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr and Bridgend