

Chief Executive Board Report

July 2026

1 Annual General Meeting

The Public Health Wales Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on the 14 July 2026, providing an important opportunity to reflect on the organisation's achievements over the past year and to engage with our staff, partners and members of the public. The event formally launched our [Annual Report for 2025/26](#), and highlighted progress against strategic priorities, celebrated the contribution of colleagues across the organisation, and reinforced our continued focus on improving population health and reducing health inequalities in Wales.

The AGM showcased key achievements delivered during 2025/26, including progress in implementing the organisation's strategic plan, maintaining strong financial stewardship, strengthening public health services and advancing major programmes to improve health outcomes for the people of Wales. The event also provided an opportunity to highlight the breadth and impact of Public Health Wales' work and the dedication of staff in delivering high-quality services across communities throughout Wales.

Following the formal AGM meeting, a street-style engagement session was held, featuring a range of stalls showcasing the diverse services, programmes and functions delivered by our teams across the organisation. The session provided Board members and members of the public with a valuable opportunity to engage directly with staff from across the organisation, learn more about current initiatives and innovations and gain further insight into the impact of our work. The event created an informal environment for colleagues to share achievements, discuss challenges and demonstrate the collective contribution being made to improve and protect the health and wellbeing of the population of Wales.

2 Meeting with the Deputy Minister for Public and Preventative Health

On the 30 June 2026, Pippa Britton, our Chairperson, and I had our first meeting with Nerys Evans, MS, the new Deputy Minister for Public and Preventative Health. This was a helpful introductory meeting covering a range of areas relating to our work and we look forward to following up with the Deputy Minister in the near future and working closely with her to support the breadth of her portfolio.

3 Our Staff Conference 2026: Putting People at the Heart of Prevention

On the 9 and 15 July 2026, we held our North and South Wales staff conference events, which brought together over 400 colleagues from across Public Health Wales under the theme *Putting people at the heart of prevention*, with around 350 staff in Cardiff and 75 in Llandudno.

The days included a powerful keynote from Steve Gilbert, OBE, who set the tone for the day. Drawing on his own experiences of bipolar disorder, depression and racial discrimination, Steve shared a personal perspective on the challenges and inequalities that can affect people's lives and health.

Through interactive workshops based on life-course personas, staff were encouraged to step into the shoes of people at different stages of life and consider the circumstances, opportunities and challenges that influence health and wellbeing. The sessions helped us explore how prevention can have the greatest impact when we understand the realities of people's lives, and reinforced the importance of designing services and interventions around the needs of the people and communities we serve.

The conference was also an opportunity to recognise the contribution of teams across the organisation, celebrate collective achievements, and reflect on the impact of our work to improve health and reduce inequalities across Wales.

4 Influencing our Uptake for Bowel Cancer Screening

Our Bowel Screening Wales team collaborated with Bridgend-based mens health group *Lads & Dads* after an invitation to speak about bowel screening after they sadly lost one of their members to bowel cancer. Steve Court (Head of Bowel Screening) and Josh Jones (Screening Pathway Co-Ordinator), Peyton Jones (Quality and Service Improvement Manager), along with colleagues from our Digital Communications Team, joined the group in Porthcawl, with Steve and Josh committing to a cold water sea swim to build rapport and trust with the group.

The day was filmed, capturing a candid roundtable discussion with group members. The Digital Communications Team edited this into a 17-minute YouTube video (<https://youtu.be/NELcDNAmkY8>) and a series of social clips, used during Bowel Cancer Awareness Month (<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1467827797760697>) and Men's Health Week (<https://fb.watch/HWlOl8Dak3/>).

The content openly tackles stigma, fear, and practical barriers to screening. The day was a clear success, helping build strong community connections, and the content has achieved 15.1k views across platforms, with ongoing promotion planned.

5 Strengthening Wales' Global Leadership in Health Impact Assessment

Public Health Wales, through our Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU), played a leading role in the recent EUPHA/Ministry of Health, Spain conference on Institutionalising Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Europe, held in Madrid. WHIASU co-organised and co-chaired the event, which brought together European public health leaders, policymakers and practitioners to explore how HIA can be embedded more systematically into decision-making processes across sectors.

This high-profile engagement reflects Wales' international reputation as a pioneer in applying HIA to support evidence-informed, equitable policy. WHIASU's leadership at the conference showcased our commitment to upstream prevention, cross-sector collaboration, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. It also reinforced

Wales' influence in shaping European public health policy and practice. Insights from the conference will inform ongoing work to strengthen the use of HIA across the Welsh Government and public services, supporting long-term outcomes on health equity, sustainability, and well-being.

6 Advancing Vaccine Equity Across Wales

Addressing vaccine inequity remains a significant public health priority, and we are proud of the leadership and collaboration demonstrated across Public Health Wales and partner organisations to tackle this challenge.

Through engagement with vaccination teams across all seven health boards, we identified a clear and consistent message that staff are highly motivated to improve vaccine equity; practical, operational guidance is needed to support local action and that teams want support to move beyond identifying inequalities to designing solutions.

Co-producing a National Vaccine Equity Toolkit

In response, our Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme (VPDP) led a national co-production initiative involving all seven health boards to develop a Vaccine Equity Toolkit.

This work, led by Cath Courts (Lead Nurse for Public Engagement) and Dr Simon Cottrell (Scientific Lead and Deputy Head of VPDP), brought together practitioners, managers, and leaders to co-design a practical, accessible resource.

The toolkit that has been developed, builds understanding of vaccine inequities and supports teams to identify and explore local gaps. It provides examples of interventions, where available, links to relevant guidance and evidence and encourages co-production, evaluation, and shared learning. Importantly, it enables staff to move from insight to action—supporting service redesign to improve equity.

National Collaboration and Governance

The toolkit was developed through a national task and finish group in 2025, with representation from all health boards. It has since been reviewed by the Welsh Government policy colleagues, considered through NHS Performance and Improvement governance structures and approved by the Vaccine Equity Group in May 2026. This reflects strong national alignment and collective ownership.

We are proud of the leadership, collaboration, and innovation demonstrated in developing the Vaccine Equity Toolkit. This work represents a significant step forward in translating national ambition into local action—supporting teams across Wales to reduce inequalities, improve vaccine uptake, and protect communities.

7 Behaviour Change Agents Programme

Our Behavioural Science Unit's Behaviour Change Agents Programme commenced in June 2026. Building on learning and ongoing success from the prototype programme,

this programme aims to grow sustainable capacity, amongst staff in Public Health Wales and its stakeholders, to use behavioural science in their efforts for better, more equitable health and wellbeing for the people of Wales. The programme is a pillar of the Behavioural Science Unit's enabling plan and is a critical component of their enabling function in the delivery of our Long Term Strategy.

Demonstrating demand for using behavioural science in practice across the public health system in Wales, over 70 colleagues applied for this multi-format learning and development programme, with half of those being selected to participate. Participants including colleagues from Public Health Wales, health boards, Welsh Government, Welsh Local Government Association, Healthcare Education and Improvement Wales, NHS Performance and Improvement and local government, have completed an induction webinar and a new, interactive, modular e-learning course, interspersed with facilitated, online consolidation sessions.

The remainder of the programme focusses on action learning, building behavioural science into live work, and exiting the programme participants will join colleagues from the first cohort in an existing peer-led consortium of practitioners sharing applied Behavioural Science successes and challenges, reflections and solutions.

8 Advancing Prevention: A Social Determinants Framework for Ending Violence Against Children

The World Health Organization (WHO) has published a landmark framework to support the implementation of its INSPIRE programme, a global initiative aimed at ending violence against children. This new social determinant framework offers countries a practical, evidence-based roadmap to address the root causes of violence through upstream policy and legislative action.

The Policy and International Health directorate at Public Health Wales developed this framework in collaboration with the WHO, recognising its potential to drive meaningful change in the lives of children and reflecting our broader commitment to advancing evidence-informed policy and international collaboration in public health.

The framework identifies seven key policy actions with evidence of success, which include:

- Promoting economic security and equality, through e.g. social protection policies, family tax credits, paid parental leave and youth employment programmes.
- Providing access to quality education, through e.g. free schooling, anti-bullying programmes, and comprehensive relationship and sex education.
- Creating safe environments, through e.g. urban regeneration, tackling homelessness and improving housing security.
- Strengthening social norms, through e.g. parenting support, child protection laws, and raising the legal age of marriage.
- Reducing harmful influences, through e.g. limiting access to alcohol and firearms.
- Improving healthcare access, through e.g. youth-friendly health services.

- Strengthening governance, through e.g. training of public officials, better data sharing, and a responsive justice system.

These strategies are grounded in a global systematic review of evidence and are designed to influence social determinants such as poverty, housing, education, and family support that shape children's risk of experiencing violence.

Relevance to Wales and Our Strategic Priorities

This framework directly supports Public Health Wales' long-term outcomes by:

- Strengthening upstream prevention, reinforcing the need to act early and across systems to reduce risk factors before harm occurs.
- Informing policy and practice, providing an evidence base to support Welsh Government and local authorities in shaping effective, equitable child-focused policies.
- Supporting cross-sector collaboration by encouraging integrated action across health, education, social care and justice, in line with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.
- Reducing inequalities targeting structural drivers of violence to help narrow health and social inequalities across the life course.

We will continue to engage with this international evidence to inform our work on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma-informed systems, and child poverty. This is a timely opportunity to strengthen our collective response to violence against children.

9 Awards and Recognition

9.1 Public Mental Health Award from Faculty of Public Health

Emily van de Venter from our Health Improvement Division, was awarded the 2026 Sarah Stewart Brown Award for Public Mental Health at this year's Faculty of Public Health Awards Ceremony. The award was for her 'leadership and innovation in public mental health. This particularly relates to her leadership of our *Hapus* programme which encourages the public to take action for their mental wellbeing and is building capacity in the heritage, culture, environment, movement and community sectors to improve equity in engagement with wellbeing promoting activities.

Hapus is shaped and overseen by a national strategic group facilitated by us and in collaboration with the Office for Future Generations, Arts Council Wales, Cadw, Sport Wales, the Mental Health Foundation, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, National Trust Cymru, Amgueddfa Cymru, the National Nature Service and the Wales NHS Confederation.

The public-facing campaign is informed by wellbeing science, evidence of what works to improve mental wellbeing and, importantly, the experiences of people at greater

risk of poor mental wellbeing. Engagement with people from less affluent communities, minoritised groups and Welsh speakers to understand what matters to them shaped the approach, content and use of language. As well as providing evidence-based resources Hapus shares the voices and experiences of people in Wales, harnessing the 'messenger effect' and to helping to make achieving good mental wellbeing feel accessible and achievable.

A dedicated bilingual [website](#) was launched in the summer of 2024, with ongoing social media activity, to build awareness of what works to protect and promote mental wellbeing. Our year 1 evaluation estimates that as of August 2025, Hapus reached around 6% of adults in Wales, or around 150,000 individuals, and 49% of those took action for the wellbeing as a result of seeing the campaign and/or engaging with Hapus resources.

Hapus has also established a network of over 100 "Hapus Supporter" organisations, - public, voluntary and community sector organisations who are working to support individual and community wellbeing. Our Supporters will help us to increase the reach of the campaign and spark conversations in real world settings and we work with them to build capacity to support individual and community wellbeing.

I would like to express my warm congratulations to Emily for such a fantastic and well deserved achievement.

9.2 Lewis White appointed as Professor of Medical Mycology, Cardiff University

Lewis White, a Consultant Clinical Scientist in our Infection Service, has recently been appointed as Professor of Medical Mycology within the Division of Infection and Immunity, School of Medicine, Cardiff University. His role is to provide international research leadership in clinical medical mycology, collaboration with Public Health Wales to deliver high-impact translational research, industry-partnered research and development, and a sustainable external funding pipeline. He will aim to shape and lead a strategic Cardiff–Public Health Wales programme in invasive fungal disease diagnostics, antifungal stewardship, and clinical pathway innovation, enhancing the University's regional, national, and global profile, while generating high-impact peer reviewed publications (e.g., Lancet ID, Lancet Microbe, Blue Journal, Nature Microbiology reviews, NEJM).

The appointment was based on Lewis's and the our Mycology Reference Laboratory's (MRL) excellent track record for research. Recently, the MRL has provided central mycological services for successful clinical trials on the efficacy of a class of new antifungal agent. Currently, it is assessing the performance metagenomics Next Generation Sequencing (mNGS) for the diagnosis of acute respiratory infections in critical care patients, with an aim to improve the detection of fungal pathogens. In 2027, it will provide diagnostic mycological services for a health technology assessment on fungal diagnostics to limit unnecessary antifungals in the intensive care unit.

The MRL unit is also heavily involved in advancing policy relating to fungal disease and antifungal resistance, working with the WHO, the UK Research and Innovation funded F1 anti-microbial resistance group and with UK politicians. The unit also have significant input into the development of global guidelines for the management of a range of fungal infections.

I would like to congratulate Lewis for such wonderful and well deserved recognition.

10 UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry Update

Public hearings for all the modules have now concluded.

Since the last update in May, the Inquiry published its fifth report on Module 5, Procurement, on the 14 July 2026. We were not core participants in this module. We did however provide a written corporate witness statement from Dr Eleri Davies. Public Health Wales is mentioned twice in the report, and these references are in the glossary section.

The Inquiry has made 11 recommendations which are aimed at all the Governments of the UK. None of the recommendations are directly applicable to the UK public health agencies. A summary of the recommendations are as follows:

1. Improvements to the composition, management and inspection of the pandemic stockpiles.
2. Pandemic response exercises to include emergency procurement and distribution.
3. Emergency procurement and distribution systems are required for the UK.
4. Implementation of Emergency healthcare equipment regulations.
5. An emergency healthcare equipment plan.
6. Blueprints for critical care medical technology.
7. Emergency international trade and domestic industry to form part of the whole-system civil emergency strategy.
8. A programme of training in emergency procurement and distribution of healthcare equipment.
9. A commercial framework agreement for the emergency procurement and distribution of healthcare equipment.
10. Improved transparency, governance and accountability in an emergency.
11. Placing data and technology at the centre of emergency procurement and distribution of healthcare equipment.

The report and its recommendations will be considered by Health Protection and Screening Services Directorate and a report will be prepared for consideration by the Business Executive Team, following which a report will also be prepared for Board.

The following is the schedule for the publication of the remaining reports.

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| 1. Module 6 – Care Sector | Autumn/Winter 2026 |
| 2. Module 7 – Test, Trace and Isolate | Winter 2026 |
| 3. Module 8 – Children and Young People | First half of 2027 |

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| 4. | Module 9 – Financial Response | First half of 2027 |
| 5. | Module 10 – Impact on Society | Middle of 2027 |

The Inquiry has confirmed that by this time next year, all of its reports will have been published.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to receive this information.

Tracey Cooper

CHIEF EXECUTIVE