

 <p> <b>GIG</b>      CYMRU  <b>NHS</b>      WALES   </p> <p>     Iechyd Cyhoeddus      Cymru      Public Health      Wales   </p>	<p> <b>Name of Meeting</b>        Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee     </p> <p> <b>Date of Meeting</b>        30 September 2025     </p> <p> <b>Agenda item:</b>        6.1     </p>
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<b>Winter/Seasonal Planning</b>	
<b>Executive lead:</b>	Professor KHAW Fu Meng, National Director Health Protection and Screening Services (HPSS), Executive Medical Director
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<b>Approval/Scrutiny route:</b>	HPSS DMT - 08/07/25
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<b>Purpose</b>
<p>This paper provides an update to the Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee on Public Health Wales coordinated response to winter planning for 2025/26. Planning for the 2025/26 winter seasons follows work undertaken for the Winter Pressures Summit held in March 2025.</p> <p>It outlines the organisation’s contributions to winter planning, current baseline mapping of winter-related activities, and the proposal to establish a centralised programme to coordinate and enhance visibility of all winter preparedness. The Committee is asked to receive assurance on progress.</p>

<b>Recommendation:</b> (note - to mark an x in the grey box below right click on the mouse, then select “properties”, and then select “checked”)				
APPROVE <input type="checkbox"/>	CONSIDER <input type="checkbox"/>	RECOMMEND <input type="checkbox"/>	ADOPT <input type="checkbox"/>	ASSURANCE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take <b>assurance</b> that initial activity around winter planning has been initiated in several areas of the organisation, an approach to coordination has been agreed and a programme to oversee this work is under development.</li> </ul>				

### **Link to Public Health Wales Strategic Plan**

Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.

This report contributes to the following:

<b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b>	1 - Influencing the wider determinants of health
<b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b>	4 - Delivering excellent public health services
<b>Strategic Priority/Well-being Objective</b>	5 - Supporting a sustainable health and care system

### **Summary impact analysis**

<b>Equality and Health Impact Assessment</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Risk and Assurance</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act</b>	A number of the areas of activity planned have the potential to improve the quality of services, both with PHW and across NHS Wales.
<b>Financial implications</b>	There may be some financial implications identified as plans are further developed. This will be kept under review.
<b>People implications</b>	Not Applicable

## 1. Purpose / situation

This paper provides an update to the Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee on Public Health Wales' coordinated response to winter planning for 2025/26.

Planning for the 2025/26 winter seasons follows work undertaken for the Winter Pressures Summit held in March 2025.

It outlines the organisation's contributions to winter planning, current baseline mapping of winter-related activities, and the proposal to establish a centralised programme to coordinate and enhance visibility of all winter preparedness. The Committee is asked to receive assurance on progress.

## 2. Background

Winter pressures continue to present significant challenges to the Welsh NHS, with increased demand on urgent and emergency care, higher rates of respiratory infections, and exacerbated health inequalities. In response, Public Health Wales contributed to a national Winter Pressures Summit in March 2025, engaging with partners across the system to identify key preventative and operational priorities. This work aligns with national objectives to reduce avoidable admissions, improve population resilience, and support the Welsh Government's commitments on fuel poverty, vaccination, and infection prevention.

## 3. Description/Assessment

Public Health Wales has undertaken a cross-organisational review of winter-related activities and identified key activities:

- Warm Homes - The Housing Warmth and Health and Wellbeing programme has provided evidence to Welsh Government on the health impacts of fuel poverty. This includes national surveys, qualitative research, and temperature monitoring in low-income households. The programme has informed policy

updates and contributes to the Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel, with further publications due in 2025–26.

- Falls Prevention - Evidence-based interventions are being scoped, including strength and balance exercises (e.g. “Get Up and Go” guide), home environment reviews, polypharmacy assessments, and third-sector partnerships. These are aimed at reducing emergency admissions, ambulance call-outs, and long-term care needs.
- Immunisation – The Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme is developing a behavioural science-informed strategy to improve uptake, particularly in underperforming GP practices. The focus includes early intervention, targeted messaging, and prioritisation of key groups such as children, pregnant women, and health and social care staff. The RSV programme is also being scaled up, with lessons drawn from high-performing regions like Scotland.
- Behavioural Science Unit is working with the Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme and Welsh Government to support Health Boards and Trusts to embed behavioural science insights into staff flu vaccination approaches and best practice
- Primary Care Division is working with NHS Performance and Improvement to pilot a peer immunisation in nursing and care homes having recognised a lot of staff are not immunised and have difficulty getting to the allocated place yet there are colleagues who are immunising residents. Although this seems like quick win, the benefits of having high rates of immunisation in staff are well documented, the bureaucratic and governance arrangements are not to be underestimated.
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) - A refreshed IPC strategy is being implemented, including peer-led audits, updated training, and action cards

linked to community prevalence. The aim is to improve compliance, reduce outbreaks, and ensure consistent application of IPC measures across settings.

- Environmental Public Health - Environmental Public Health Team promotes the use of regular appliance checks, CO alarms and knowledge of the symptoms of CO poisoning to reduce winter-related increases in cases of CO poisoning.
- Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre (CDSC) and Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme (VPDP) monitor respiratory and other pathogens and their impact on the healthcare system over the winter period, sharing findings and insights with partners. Additional elements for 2025/6 include:
  - ❖ New surveillance output on respiratory infections in a care home setting to be introduced in advance of the 25/26 season.
  - ❖ Short-term modelling to estimate upcoming impacts on the healthcare system.
  - ❖ Piloting sentinel surveillance in care homes, and auditing of retrospective respiratory outbreak completeness.
  - ❖ CDSC pandemic preparedness cell. Fortnightly meetings and development of a comprehensive epi plan to sit beneath the PHW pandemic preparedness plan, utilising WHO Mosaic surveillance principles and linking with UK nations to identify work carried out at UK level through collaboration.
- Environmental Public Health Team advocates for adaptation efforts to provide warm spaces in the community that will provide safe, warm environments that should contribute to reduced risk of falling and reduced loneliness and isolation. The team also encourages greater adaptation to reduce the health effects of adverse weather events such as floods and storms, as well as supporting the response to such events.
- The Policy and International Health Directorate is updating its report Improving winter health and well-being and reducing winter pressures in Wales: A

preventative approach (2019). The report Winter Well-being: shared actions & impact will apply a behavioural science lens to support those already planning and preparing for winter by providing an action-oriented approach with both individual and system-wide interventions.

- The Primary Care Division through the Greener Primary Care Wales Scheme encourages primary care contractors to make plans to protect their patients, staff and premises to ensure quality care and continuity of services in the event of extreme weather conditions through adaptation planning and practice measures.
- The Health Improvement team works to protect and improve physical and mental health and wellbeing across the population and for targeted groups to help reduce the burden of ill-health on the NHS. On-going activities include:
  - Smoking prevention and support to stop through social marketing activities and [Help me Quit](#) services. A smoking cessation app is due to be launched and a mass media campaign will run in autumn/winter. Additionally 'Help Me Quit in Hospital' training is to be promoted to healthcare staff to enable them to support smokers during patient interactions.
  - ['Making Every Contact Count'](#) training for health services (and wider organisations) to support positive behaviour change and healthier lifestyles.
  - [National Exercise on Referral](#); a 16 week chronic condition prevention and management programme to increase physical activity in adults at risk of, or with an existing, chronic condition.
  - Promoting mental wellbeing through the [Hapus](#) programme, with additional benefits for physical health given the association between better mental wellbeing, improved immune system responses and cardiovascular health and healthy behaviours.
  - Promoting healthy weight and healthier food and activity through [Healthy Weight Healthy You](#).



- Enhancing weight management pathways to support people to reach and maintain a healthier weight, reducing the risk of health conditions and improving outcomes.
- Promotion of [Add To Your Life](#) to patients waiting for treatment to empower patients to improve their health and wellbeing and improve treatment outcomes.
- [Healthy Working Wales](#): Working with and through employers, including NHS trusts, to promote the health and wellbeing of their staff.
- Primary care division continue to work with deep end, clusters and health boards on health inequalities and inclusion health recognising that respiratory disease is one of the biggest drivers of health inequalities and unscheduled admissions and sharing and spreading the actions that can prevent or reduce these.
- Activity is already underway in these different areas. Different routes to impact are being considered with regard to these areas, ranging from directly procured activities such as media campaigns, through to enabling other organisations to effectively deliver interventions to upstream advice to help shape effective policy. For example, the Behavioural Science Unit was asked by NHS Leadership team to support Health Boards and Trusts to embed behavioural science insights into staff flu immunisation plans.
- A baselining assessment of this activity has now been initiated and agreement for a working group to be convened by the Deputy National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services to map out and coordinate between different areas of work.

## **Risks and Implications:**

With a Welsh Government policy focus on addressing winter pressures there is an opportunity to address issues in implementation of public health services and addressing risks e.g.

- Continued variation in vaccine uptake and IPC compliance could undermine system resilience (Health and care Staff and public).
- Fuel poverty and cold homes remain a significant public health risk.

Without central coordination, there is a risk of fragmented delivery and missed opportunities for impact.

## **Assurance:**

The table in Appendix One outlines the planning within the organisation for winter pressures that would be overseen by coordinating group.

Future assurance will be provided through the current scheduled updates to the Committee, including progress against key milestones, impact metrics, and stakeholder engagement outcomes.

### **3.1 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

*This work has been put together following the five ways of working, as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act, in the following ways:*

Hirdymor



Long Term

*The programme addresses long-term health outcomes by focusing on upstream prevention (e.g. fuel poverty, falls prevention).*



*Emphasis is placed on reducing avoidable admissions and health deterioration through vaccination, IPC, and community-based interventions.*



*The programme aligns with national health and social care objectives and supports cross-sector collaboration.*



*Developed through engagement with internal directorates and external partners including Welsh Government, health boards, and local authorities.*



*Informed by lived experience research (e.g. housing and warmth studies) and behavioural insights to shape public messaging and service design.*

#### 4. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to:

- Take **assurance** that initial activity around winter planning has been initiated in several areas of the organisation, an approach to coordination has been agreed and a programme to oversee this work is under development.

## Appendix One

# Winter Pressures 2025

## HPSS Directorate Operations Team

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
HPSS	HARP	Review of Acute Respiratory Infection (including COVID-19) IPC Guidance and update. Late Summer – early September for the Winter Season. Guidance available on our HARP website: ARI - Acute Respiratory Infections - Public Health Wales.	August - September	<p>Guidance available on HARP website: ARI - Acute Respiratory Infections - Public Health Wales.</p> <p>September: ARI guidance review no planned changes to 2024/5 version.</p>
HPSS	HARP	Provide general IPC Guidance and Support to the NHS in Wales throughout.	Complete	National Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Wales available on our website: NIPCM - Public Health Wales with a version adapted for care homes that include a different use of language.
HPSS	HARP	Contribute to Systems Resilience and Winter Preparedness meetings held by WG.	On-going	<p>Regular attendees at PPE operational group.</p> <p>Update given to WG policy advisor to support plans.</p>
HPSS	HARP	Work closely with NHS Wales Performance	On-going	HCAI DG in place chaired by NHS P&I. CDI reduction safety collaborative learning

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
		and Improvement colleagues to support the quality and delivery agendas, sharing information and collaborating on support to NHS Wales.		event 7 <sup>th</sup> October (in person).
HPSS	HARP	Summer IPC Forum focussed on Winter Pressures / Preparedness.	25 <sup>th</sup> June 25	Complete as per update August 2025.
HPSS	HARP	Webinars arranged for UTI management in care homes / community focussed on managing deteriorating patients / admission avoidance.	September 2025	Series complete.
HPSS	HARP	Working on an advisory note to WG in regard to their preparation of a WHC to NHS Wales with improvement goals for HCAI & AMR, reduction in C. difficile burden and improvements in antimicrobial stewardship all contribute to improved patient flows	On-going	WHC advice given, awaiting WG publication.

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
		and support for winter pressures.		
Operations and Finance	Communications	<p>Integrated, public-facing marketing campaign utilising paid, earned, shared and owned channels to build knowledge of the flu vaccine as the best way to stay protected this winter. The campaign is designed to promote action amongst eligible groups to take up their offer of the vaccine. Campaign will focus primarily on flu but also cover other viruses circulating over winter (RSV, COVID-19).</p>	<p>Campaign will be timed to match vaccination roll out from September to early 2026.</p>	<p>Increasing knowledge of the benefits of vaccination.</p> <p>Motivating those eligible to take up their offer and encourage a commitment to action.</p> <p>Targeted focus on where uptake is less strong means working more closely with communities rather than relying solely on mass-communications.</p>
Operations and Finance	Communications	<p>Marketing activity to promote preventative behaviours to stay well this winter such as handwashing, staying away from others if you have symptoms.</p>	<p>October until February (TBC)</p>	<p>Increasing awareness of what to do to prevent the spread of viruses this winter with the wider impact being a reduction in the spread of respiratory illness and hospitalisation.</p>



Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
RDD + others	Data Science and Analysis	Contribute to updating the 2018 <a href="#">winter health report</a> .	May – November 2025	Updated information and guidance for system partners, to be published on the website.
NQIG		Roll-out of flu vaccinations to all staff.	Planning commenced in July and programme will go live on 7 <sup>th</sup> October 2025. Communications plan in place and will commence the end of October.	In collaboration with POD, training sessions will be delivered to flu champions to help promote uptake. Insights from VPDP and Behavioural Science have informed strategies to reduce barriers, including offering drop-in clinics and providing digital pharmacy vouchers. These initiatives will be supported by a targeted and appropriate communications approach.
NQIG		Consideration of mask-wearing guidance escalation for both the vulnerable public groups and staff in patient-facing roles.	Autumn in conjunction with the wider NHS Wales system.	<p>Clear guidance on when to trigger guidance on mask-wearing in order for measure to be effective and timely, ensuring it remains easily understandable.</p> <p>Meeting with IPC leads and HARP to review and progress decision making framework for NHS Wales. Also linking with NHSE on similar project.</p> <p>Further work to be undertaken on reviewing the evidence base and gaining a clear understanding of wearing masks in public places, particularly for those more susceptible to respiratory illness.</p>

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
				<p>Meeting with PHW comms team to progress how we can integrate mask/face coverings into the keeping well this winter campaign.</p>
NQIG /HWB	Core group	<p>Exploring opportunities at the prevention end of Falls prevention. Working with WG Policy/6 Goals colleagues.</p>	<p>High level plan implemented from June 2025.</p> <p>For further details on timeline, please see Appendix 1.</p>	<p>We know that what matters to adults with complex needs / older people living with frailty is to remain as well and independent as possible in their own homes and connected to their communities. Our population outcome indicator is therefore considered to be 'healthy days at home' or alternatively 'independent at home'.</p> <p>We are currently unable to systematically measure this outcome across Wales. The following system level indicators are suggested as reasonable proxy indicators and have been a core component of the Care Action Committee for Building Community Capacity since October 2023. Quality outcome measures should also provide us the patient / service user's experience.</p> <p>These system indicators also allow us to monitor how the ICCS at Regional level may be optimising health and social care</p>

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
				<p>resource. Process measures should also be monitored that tell us 'how much' and 'how well' components of the system are delivering and subsequently contributing to impact on the system.</p> <p>Ultimately, we would expect that our system contributes to reducing falls incidence, maintaining independence and avoiding conveyance and admission to hospital. As a minimum we should expect the following with implementation of relevant actions.</p> <p>Update 06/08/25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further discussion as a leadership group have agreed the interventions (workstreams for low risk fallers)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Environmental assessments</li> <li>o MECC for FRAT(inc. social prescribers / IAA LA provision / digital technology eg App, routine follow ups with professionals) and onward</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
				referral for those 'at risk' for meds mgt review etc via ? Falls / Frailty Nurses in Health Boards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ NERS referral increase for Strength and Balance programmes</li> <li>○ Public Awareness Campaigns</li> </ul> Policy and International health looking at evidence review for this population group, and impact of interventions.
HWB	Help Me Quit	Help Me Quit in Hospital training for staff.  Launch of Help Me Quit App.  'Break Its Hold' - launch of new HMQ brand platform and media campaign.	In progress.  Work underway, aiming for launch in Q3.  Planning underway for launch late Q3.	Increased uptake of support to stop smoking among those at higher risk of/already experiencing health harms.  Increased uptake of support to stop smoking.
HWB	NERS	On-going promotion of NERS and support to NERS Co-ordinators Developing proposals to enhance	Reviewing evidence (published literature and participant feedback) to inform recommendations.  Engagement with NERS Co-ordinators planned for October.	Increased adherence to local 16-week NERS programmes leading to increased likelihood of embedding behaviour change and improved physical health.

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
		adherence to NERS.		
HWB	PCD Prevention:	Social Prescribing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mixed methods evaluation of holistic Warm Wales intervention.</li> <li>- Social prescribing and financial wellbeing scoping review.</li> </ul>	Warm Wales evaluation – April 2025 – March 2026.  Financial wellbeing scoping review – completion anticipated by December 2025.	Warm Wales evaluation will enable understanding of impact of intervention on respiratory outcomes. NIHR bid being explored to see if broader outcomes (especially in relation to financial wellbeing and mental wellbeing) in line with broad ‘social prescribing’ approach of WW intervention. Financial wellbeing and social prescribing scoping review will help to increase understanding in Wales of nature of interventions related to social prescribing and financial wellbeing, and position of the current evidence base.
HWB	Greener Primary Care Wales	Provision of a Framework encouraging primary care to take action to protect patients, staff, premises and service delivery.	Continue to update the Framework aligned to policy and national adaptation plans.  Collection and sharing of case studies.	Increasing awareness of what primary care can and should do to prepare for adverse weather events.  Continuity of primary care service provision.
HWB	Nutrition and Obesity	Review and update HWHY content for maintaining healthier food and activity during winter.	Content review and update content commencing August for completion Nov 25.	Enhance advice to enable and promote healthier behaviours amongst people who are above a healthier weight who are at particular risk of developing health conditions.

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
Policy and International Health	Specialist Projects	Report on the experiences of low-income households at home during winter including their indoor temperatures experienced and health and well-being.	Autumn release.	This work will help inform sustainable and equitable public health responses to cold homes and the support available to low-income households during winter. Findings will support policy and actions on fuel poverty and healthy housing.
Policy and International Health	Behavioural Science Unit	Preventative report on improving winter health and reducing winter pressures being updated.	Early Autumn release.	This refresh of a previous report will apply a behavioural science lens by providing an action-oriented approach for both individual and system-wide interventions.
Policy and International Health	Behavioural Science Unit	Support for Health Boards for staff flu vaccinations.	Awaiting contact points for diary invites.	Session for Health Board contacts to understand some of the barriers and strategies to overcome uptake of staff vaccinations.
HPSS	VPDP	Potential improved agility and quality of surveillance due to new delivery system of flu vaccines.	<u>September</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two and three year olds HB level – w/c 15th September.</li> <li>School aged HB level data for those using WIS – w/c 15th September.</li> <li>65+ and 16y-64y at clinical risk Health HB level data – w/c 29th September.</li> <li>Occ Health HB level data incl. PHW staff – w/c 29th September.</li> </ul> <u>October</u>	<p>The transfer of data to WIS allows the use of deduplicated data which is captured in real time in the flu surveillance.</p> <p>This will allow:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more accurate reporting of uptake across all providers</li> <li>reduced reliance on surveys for uptake increasing ability to report</li> <li>improved reporting on inequalities</li> <li>contribute to UK estimates on</li> </ul>

Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First 2025/26 season COVID-19 Weekly report – 6th October.</li> <li>• School aged HB level data for those not using WIS –w/c 13th October.</li> <li>• Full suite of IVOR reports and clinical risk breakdowns – w/c 13th October.</li> <li>• School level reporting for those using WIS – w/c 13th October.</li> <li>• Vaccination in pregnant women report – End Oct.</li> <li>• Counts of vaccines given in prisons and to poultry workers – End Oct.</li> </ul> <p><u>November</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report on coverage in homeless populations using SAIL data – date TBC depends on refresh timelines.</li> <li>• Report on coverage in domiciliary carers using SAIL data – date TBC depends on refresh timelines.</li> <li>• Report on coverage in household contacts of the immunocompromised using SAIL data – date TBC depends on refresh timelines and scoping.</li> </ul>	vaccine effectiveness
HPSS	Health Protection	Planned work ensuring	In progress/ on-going	This will allow for an increased number of



Public Health Wales Directorate	Division Programme	Action - What work is being undertaken	Planning - start date to support delivery	Intended Impact
		<p>sufficient surge capacity and business continuity for increased demand.</p> <p>A plan has been developed to manage the increased workload whilst ensuring service continuity is maintained. The plan is flexible to response needs and service pressures. It includes service level provisions from Business as Usual - standard acceptable service – minimum acceptable service – below minimum acceptable service. The plan includes surge support from the National Health Protection Surge Team and re-prioritisation of AWARe activity.</p>		<p>queries to be dealt with in a timely and safe manner.</p>