

Chief Executive Board Report

January 2024

1 Update on the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry

The following provides an update on the current activities of the organisation in relation to the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry up to the 12 January 2024.

1.1 Module 1 (Resilience and Preparedness)

Following the conclusion of the Public Hearings in July last year, the report of the Inquiry is currently awaited.

1.2 Modules 2 (Core UK Government Decision Making) and 2B (Core Welsh Government Decision Making)

The Public Hearings for Module 2 have now concluded. Public Health Wales is not a Core Participant in this module but the output from the hearings was actively monitored and will be incorporated into the Module 2B response. The Public Hearings for Module 2A (Core Scottish Government Decision Making) are due to commence on the 16 January 2024. Output from the hearings will be actively monitored.

As a Core Participant for Module 2B, work continues to ensure we maintain an effective response to the Inquiry Team requests for evidence, and also that we prepare for the Public Hearing in Cardiff from the 27 February until the 15 March 2024.

Evidence from other Core Participants is regularly being released onto the Inquiry evidence platform in large batches, with over 20,000 documents currently uploaded. We are continuing to review this evidence as it arrives and taking steps to ensure appropriate resources are in place to review what is anticipated to be a large volume of evidence disclosure, running up to the commencement of the Public Hearing. which will be heard.

It is likely that the Inquiry will seek oral evidence from a number of Public Health Wales staff at the Public Hearing, and we continue to work with our solicitors and barristers to ensure our witnesses are properly supported to provide any evidence they may be called to give. In addition, we have staff welfare facilities in place and available to support those required to give evidence should they require it.

1.3 Module 3 (Impact on Healthcare Systems)

Public Health Wales is not a Core Participant for Module 3 but has provided evidence to the Inquiry. The Public Hearings for Module 3 are scheduled to take place in the Autumn of 2024.

1.4 Module 4 (Vaccines and Therapeutics)

Public Health Wales is a Core Participant for Module 4 and we are currently responding to a detailed Rule 9 evidence request made by the Inquiry.

The Public Hearings for this Module are being rescheduled and will no longer take place in the summer of 2024. Alternative dates have not yet been provided by the Inquiry. Public Health Wales may be called upon to provide oral witness evidence at the rescheduled hearing.

1.5 Module 5 (Procurement)

Public Health Wales is not a Core Participant for this module.

1.6 Module 6 (Care Sector)

Public Health Wales will be applying to become a core participant in this module. The deadline for applications is the 19 January 2024.

1.7 Future Modules

There has been no further update in respect of future modules. It is anticipated that the next Module will focus on testing and tracing. Preparations for this module are currently underway.

The following other Modules are anticipated based on information taken from the Inquiry's website. These Modules will cover both 'system' and 'impact' issues across the UK with the Inquiry Chair indicating the Public Hearings will conclude by 2026:

- The Government's business and financial responses
- Health inequalities and the impact of Covid-19
- Education, children and young persons
- Other public services, including frontline delivery by key workers.

2 Mid-Year Joint Executive Team Accountability Meeting with the Welsh Government

As part of the accountability arrangements between Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government (WG), we have a mid-year and end of year accountability meeting with the Executive Team of the Health and Social Services Group in the WG, where they assess the performance and delivery of the organisation against the Operational Plan for the year, this is referred to as a Joint Executive Team (JET) meeting. The mid-year JET meeting for 2023/2024 took place on the 6 December 2023. The focus of the meeting was on:

1. Organisational reflections on first six months and focus for the remainder of the year.
2. Progress against Ministerial priorities.

3. Maternity and neonatal services.
4. Governance and risk management.
5. Board stability and succession planning.
6. Workforce and recruitment challenges and solutions.
7. Planning and financial decisions under consideration.
8. Plans for winter 2023.

It was a very positive and constructive meeting covering the significant breadth of the work of the organisation. Attached is my cover letter to Judith Paget, Director General for Health and Social Services/NHS Chief Executive, and the JET Summary pack that we provided for the meeting.

It was an opportunity for us to once again to thank our exceptional staff across the organisation for their unrelenting professionalism and commitment in protecting and transforming the health of our population in Wales, in what are challenging times.

3 Visit from the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency

On the 4 December 2023, Aidan Dawson, Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency came to Cardiff to meet with us and as an opportunity to share the work of both of the organisations. It was a very positive and helpful day during which time we discussed the long-term focus; aspects of health protection and screening services; digital, data and artificial intelligence; the prevalence of disease and healthy behaviours; tackling health harming substances; climate and health; international health and the wellbeing economy and relationships with partners.

In addition, on the 15 January 2024, Jan Williams, Chairperson, and I had a virtual meeting with Aidan and Colin Coffey – the new Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency, to continue to share and build a strong relationship between the two organisations.

4 Meetings with the Chief Executives of the UK Public Health Agencies

I have previously updated the Board in relation to the quarterly meetings that we have as Chief Executives of the UK Public Health Agencies. Our last meeting was on the 12 January 2024. As a result of these meetings, and periodic joint meetings with the chairs of the UK Public Health Agencies, a number of cross-agency, UK themed discussions have taken place which may evolve into more regularised 'networks'. These include themed discussions on:

- ❖ Climate and health
- ❖ Prevalence of disease and sustainable health and care systems
- ❖ Work and health
- ❖ Substance misuse (yet to take place)

Given the shared challenges that we face in all parts of the UK, working together in a constructive and supportive way to share learning and approaches is key in the current environment.

5 Meeting with Commissioners

On the 7 December 2023, we were delighted to host Efa Gruffudd Jones, the Welsh Language Commissioner for a visit in our Cardiff offices. Chaired by Kate Eden, our Vice-Chairperson, it was a good opportunity to hear from the Commissioner her reflections on how she feels the implementation of the Welsh language standards and the required culture to do so is progressing across Wales. It was also an excellent opportunity for us to share all the work we have been doing across the organisation with our teams, to further embed the Welsh language across all that we do and bring it to life even more.

I would like to thank Sarah Brewer our Head of Employee Experience, Sian Jones our Welsh Language Manager, all of our wonderful people in our Welsh Language Network – Ymlaen, Rachel Attwood our Assistant Director of Organisational Development and Engagement and Neil Lewis our Director of People and Organisational Development for all of your ongoing leadership for us in helping us embed the Welsh Language in our culture and our work.

On the 8 January 2024, we were delighted to host a visit by Eleanor Lyons, the recently appointed Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner for the UK, to our offices in Cardiff. The meeting was chaired by Jan Williams, and we were joined by Alun Micheal, the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner. It was an excellent opportunity to hear what the Commissioner's emerging priorities are and also to update the Commissioner on all the work across the organisation that is being done on prevention and early intervention in this area. Updates were provided across a range of areas including trauma-informed practice, violence prevention, safeguarding, domestic homicide reviews from Jo Hopkins, Programme Director for Adverse Childhood Experiences, Criminal Justice and Violence Prevention; Sumina Azam, National Director for Policy and International Health; Natalie Blakeborough, Training, Strategy and Skills Development Manager; Debbie Pachu, Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Clare Thomas Designated Doctor for the National Safeguarding Service . It was also an opportunity to share learning from policing and the opportunities that exist in Wales.

6 Appointment to the Executive Board of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes

I am delighted to say that I have been appointed to the Executive Board of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes (IANPHI) for a three-year period following a recent election.

The IANPHI is a non-profit global association with 125 members in over 98 countries covering over 6 billion people. Its mission is to collectively build public health capacity and capabilities by connecting, developing and strengthening national public health institutes worldwide. This includes peer-to-peer reviews,

advice for Governments, working closely with the World Health Organization and supporting countries in response to public health threats including Ebola virus disease, Coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to receive this information.

Tracey Cooper

CHIEF EXECUTIVE