

Working to achieve a healthier future for Wales

Public Health Wales Our Strategic Equality Plan and objectives 2024 – 2028

Introduction by the Chair and Chief Executive

Welcome to our Strategic Equality Plan and objectives for the next four years. Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute their ideas, thoughts and comments. We welcome the opportunity to gain a much better understanding of how you would like to work with us in the future and, more importantly, the progress you expect us to make.

We acknowledge the inequalities faced by some groups and communities in Wales and we are determined to do what we can to challenge this. We will continue to work with others to build more united communities and involve people who reflect the diversity of our communities.

Promoting fairness is vital in our work to protect and improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities for everyone in Wales. We particularly want to improve access to and experience for people and groups who are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. This plan will help us make sure our decisions are fair and that we contribute as much as we can to achieving a more equal Wales. As part of this work, we will continue to make sure that we use every opportunity to embrace the Welsh language and promote our rich cultural identity. We have also linked this plan with our Long-term Strategy and our People Strategy, to make sure we are able to deliver our equality objectives and build on existing work to create an inclusive organisation where everyone can reach their full potential.

This plan was developed in full consultation with our staff, our diversity networks and trade union representatives, as well as community groups and members of the public. Following the consultation, the plan was reviewed and signed off by our Executive Team and Board.

As we continue to recover following the Covid-19 pandemic, our work has presented us with many challenges, particularly in terms of equality. Evidence has shown that certain groups of the population, such as people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, continue to experience health inequalities. Other factors which affect people's health include their age, their sex, multiple health conditions, and social and economic reasons.

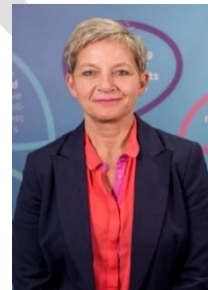
The pandemic has also provided us with an opportunity to review how we do things and shown us that there are different, more flexible ways of working.

Publishing our plan and equality objectives shows that we are listening and responding to the expert knowledge of the voluntary and community sectors and will continue to do so. Our success will be measured by the contribution we make to improving the health and well-being of communities at a local and national level and supporting other public-sector partners to meet the needs of the population.

We recognise that we can always do more. If you think you can help us we would like to hear from you.



Jan Williams, Chair



Tracey Cooper, Chief Executive



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Handwritten signature of Tracey Cooper in black ink.

About Public Health Wales

Who we are and what we do

We are Public Health Wales – the national public health organisation for Wales. Our purpose is working together for a healthier Wales.

We are working towards a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives and where everyone has fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and well-being.

Our [Long Term Strategy \(2023-2035\)](#) sets out our vision for achieving a healthier future for people in Wales by 2035. This plan will help us to deliver that strategy.

Our equality objectives are about culture and behaviours, and fully incorporating them in all that we do. A number of our objectives have measures and targets. We have included these with the aim of instilling the right behaviours and attitudes in our staff. We will need to make sure that our plan supports staff to continue to improve our culture and ‘how we work’.

The first four objectives in this plan focus on our staff and making sure we provide an environment where everyone is encouraged to be themselves. However, these four principles should also be clear through our wider interaction with other NHS colleagues and the public. The other two objectives are focused on our services and making sure that we continue to listen and respond to those who use them.

Our Long-term Strategy focuses on the following six priorities.

- Influencing the wider determinants of health (the factors which influence people’s health)
- Promoting mental and social well-being
- Promoting healthy behaviours
- Delivering excellent public health services

- Supporting a sustainable health and care system
- Tackling public health effects of climate change

You can read more about these priorities [here](#).

Since we published our last Strategic Equality Plan and objectives in 2020, our organisation has changed considerably. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant effect on our work, as we put ourselves at the centre of the response in Wales. We are pleased to have the opportunity to review our plan as we recover from the pandemic. We have made considerable progress towards becoming a more inclusive organisation. Since signing up as Stonewall Diversity Champions in 2017, we have taken part in the Workplace Equality Index and remained in the UK Top 100 LGBTQ+ inclusive employers list for a number of years. We renewed our Disability Confident Leader status in July 2022, and became the first NHS organisation in Wales to take part in the Workplace Cultural Competence certification scheme run by Diverse Cymru. The scheme awarded us Silver status in 2021, Silver Plus in 2022 and Gold in 2023. It assesses our performance against a range of measures to see how inclusive we are for black, Asian and minority ethnic staff. We also set up a further two staff network groups for Welsh speakers and men in 2022, in addition to the more established staff network groups for LGBTQ+, women, carers, disabled people and black, Asian and minority ethnic staff.

We have refreshed our equality plan and objectives by talking to different groups of people and communities across Wales. These include stakeholders from voluntary and community organisations, as well as our seven staff diversity networks, trade union representatives, programme leads and Board. We also asked our Time to Talk Public Health panel of over 1000 people for their views on our objectives, as we wanted to make sure they were meaningful and relevant. More importantly, we wanted to know what 'good' services looked like to them.

We know that the burden of poor health is not spread equally across society. People with learning disabilities, older people, and black, Asian and minority

ethnic people are more likely to experience health inequalities as a result of not being able to access mainstream healthcare services.

We have looked at evidence gathered by the Welsh Government when developing their Anti Racist Wales Action Plan, LGBTQ Action Plan and Disability Action Plan, as well as local and national reports. The reports provide a short summary of evidence for Wales and, based on this evidence, the key challenges that need action. Our equality objectives support the actions set out in the Welsh Government plans, as well as the commitments in our Long-term Strategy.

Public Health Wales as an employer

We employ around 2400 people in locations across Wales. Our staff work in a variety of different places, from offices to laboratories and out in the community. Collecting, analysing and publishing equality information about our workforce helps us to:

- understand how our policies and practices affect our staff with protected characteristics (see below) and plan more effectively around their needs;
- see whether our workforce reflects the community it serves; and
- identify areas to develop positive action programmes and be more open about our practices and decision-making.

We recognise that we have more to do to encourage our staff and job applicants to provide information relating to their protected characteristics. We will continue to explain why we are collecting this information and reassure people about confidentiality. (The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of these.)

In line with the public sector duty, we will publish our employment equality information in our annual report, along with an analysis of whether we are meeting our duty to promote equality and eliminate discrimination.

Our People Strategy

We published our People Strategy in January 2020. It includes details of the work we continue to do to support the equality objectives and actions set out in this document, and the plan that underpins them. We are reviewing the People Strategy in line with this plan to make sure this work is included in everything we do.

Our strategic equality objectives 2024 to 2028

Objective 1: Our workforce, Board and committees

Our workforce will more closely reflect the population of Wales (according to Office for National Statistics data) in terms of protected characteristics and Welsh speakers in each pay band throughout each year of this plan.

Our Board and committees will also more closely reflect the make-up of the population and will include more Welsh speakers.

We want to more accurately reflect the diversity of the population of Wales. The percentage of our black, Asian and minority ethnic staff (8%) is slightly higher than the percentage rate for the whole of Wales (7.8%), but this is not reflected regionally, or equally distributed across our pay bands. Six per cent of our staff declare themselves as disabled, compared with 22.1% of the Welsh population. This highlights that there is work for us to do to more accurately reflect the Welsh people. Our Board should also reflect the communities we serve. Also, during 2022 to 2023, 364 of our staff chose not to share their sexuality. We want to be an organisation where all members of staff feel confident about being themselves at work.

Measures of success

- ✓ Each year, we will increase numbers across all pay bands for black, Asian and minority ethnic staff, disabled staff and LGBTQ+ staff.
- ✓ We will maintain disclosure rates (rates of staff sharing equality information with us) of over 80%.
- ✓ We will have strong and clear workforce plans which clearly set out how we will increase the number of people from under-represented groups and Welsh speakers in our organisation.
- ✓ We will offer work-placement schemes for minority ethnic, economically disadvantaged and disabled candidates, offering at least five placements each year.
- ✓ Our People Promise will be firmly established and we will have a culture of trust and respect where everyone can thrive.

What we will do to achieve this

- Recruit a more diverse workforce, Board and committees by advertising to and engaging with communities, and targeting recruitment where we are under-represented.
- Maintain high disclosure rates so that we can monitor our progress in achieving a more diverse workforce.
- Review our workforce plans and employ more people from under-represented groups, including Welsh speakers and people with diverse skills.
- Review how we recruit and select employees to make sure we achieve a more diverse workforce, and identify and remove any unintended barriers .
- Set up work-placement schemes for disabled people and minority ethnic and economically disadvantaged groups, to address employment gaps.

- Advertise to communities and voluntary and charity organisations when recruiting for Board positions.
- Monitor information on attracting and recruiting staff, and why they leave, to make sure we are not disproportionately losing colleagues from minority groups.
- Encourage staff across all bands to share their experience of working for us and act as role models to help us identify areas where we can improve.

Objective 2: Listening to and understanding our people

We will continually learn about equality, diversity and inclusion and the actions that positively affect them.

We will give employees an effective voice, act on the feedback we receive, and welcome staff, the public and other organisations to actively challenge our actions.

Our staff diversity networks are a huge asset, and we value their insight as we develop and shape our organisation. We want to continue to hear and learn from the diverse voices of all our staff so that we can continue to build an inclusive organisation where everyone can give their best.

Measures of success

- ✓ The numbers of people involved with our diversity networks will have increased by 10%.
- ✓ We will have in place a reverse mentoring scheme ,where people from under-represented groups mentor someone who does not come from that same group, so that they can learn more about the challenges and barriers experienced. The scheme will have at least five pairings in the first year, increasing each year of the plan.

- ✓ We will have improved our standing in external assessments (such as Stonewall Workplace Equality index and Diverse Cymru Cultural Competence) each year, and maintain our Disability Confident Leader Status when it is renewed in 2025.
- ✓ We will have developed and put in place a range of resources and guidance on neurodiversity for staff and managers.

What we will do to achieve this

- Continue to add to, engage with, promote and support our staff diversity networks and role models from these groups.
- Put in place a reverse mentoring programme.
- Continue to work in partnership with our trade unions, communities and voluntary and community organisations to support equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Improve our understanding of the experiences of people from under-represented groups and the issues they face, and aim to continue improving through external assessments and learning from others.
- Make developing awareness and knowledge of neurodiversity among our staff and managers a priority.

Objective 3: Fair pay

We will be a fair-pay employer and will identify and publish pay gaps for gender, ethnicity and disability.

We will monitor these pay gaps and aim to reduce them for each year of this plan by balancing the diversity of our workforce across our pay bands. (For example, to reduce our gender pay gap, we would need to recruit more men in lower grades and increase the number of women in higher grades.)

We will build on the great progress we have made in reducing our gender pay gap. We will continue to address this and other pay gaps through helping our people learn new skills and providing opportunities for career advancement.

We also want to make sure we are providing fair work opportunities and will look for recognition from outside organisations to make sure we are doing all we can.

Measures of success

- ✓ We will be recognised as a Living Wage Employer and this will be displayed on our recruitment pages.
- ✓ We will introduce a mentoring scheme with at least 10 pairings in the first year, increasing each year of this plan.
- ✓ We will set aside at least five places on the Management and Leadership Development Programme for minority ethnic, disabled, LGBTQ+ staff and women, and monitor outcomes.
- ✓ Our workforce plans will set out how we will help under-represented groups take up opportunities to develop, as set out in our People Promise.

What we will do to achieve this

- Identify, report and understand the reasons for any pay gaps and take appropriate action.
- Make sure we are accredited as a Living Wage employer.
- Use consistent flexible-working practices.
- Introduce coaching and mentoring schemes to help staff from under-represented groups reach their full potential. There will be at least 10 pairings in the schemes in the first year, increasing each year.
- Further develop and roll out our Management and Leadership Development Programme, with places set aside for under-represented groups.

- Report each year on our gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps, the progress made and our plans to address these gaps.

Objective 4: Culture and leadership

We will create an inclusive environment in which equality, diversity and inclusion are prioritised, and staff feel they belong, are safe, can be themselves without fear of being judged, and are supported to develop, thrive and reach their full potential.

Our leaders and managers will be role models for, and encourage a focus on, equality, diversity and inclusion. This will show in how we attract and recruit staff and in how our job roles are designed, our learning and development opportunities, and performance management.

We will focus on developing our staff from under-represented groups, making sure that there are equal opportunities for career advancement and to learn new skills.

Through 'Being our Best' (our new behavioural framework)– we will make sure that all staff understand the importance of fair and inclusive behaviours that support our values, and how this affects individuals.

Measures of success

- ✓ 12Our learning and development courses will help improve our understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- ✓ We will monitor and evaluate the effect of 'Being our Best'. We will report our findings to our Business Executive Team and the People and Organisational Development Committee so we can understand the experiences of our staff and make sure everyone gets the maximum benefit from more compassionate and understanding leaders and managers.
- ✓ To develop these skills among our leaders and managers we will put in place a programme of work which has compassionate and inclusive

leadership at its heart. We will monitor the outcomes of the programme to help support our work around culture.

What we will do to achieve this

- Continue to roll out our Management and Leadership programme, with places set aside for under-represented groups.
- Firmly incorporate equality, diversity and inclusion in all our policies, processes and systems and learning and development, including opportunities for shadowing leaders from other organisations that represent diverse groups.
- Hold at least four events each year to raise awareness on diversity.
- Continue to carry out the actions required from the results of our culture survey, to make sure we have an inclusive culture that promotes our values.

Objective 5: Data and systems

We are committed to understanding the people we work with and for. We will make sure that we use a range of ways to gather information about our population and ask for feedback. We remain committed to acting on the feedback we receive, making improvements where needed.

Measures of success

- ✓ We will have a strong and clear process for completing and monitoring equality impact assessments.

- ✓ There will be a Once for Wales system in place for monitoring diversity information about our service users so we can identify areas of low uptake and poorer outcomes.
- ✓ We will update our Electronic Staff Records system to more accurately reflect transgender status and neurodivergence.
- ✓ We will have a Digital Strategy which clearly sets out how we will reach service users, including those who may not have access to a computer or the skills or confidence to use one.
- ✓ We will have a system in place for reporting and monitoring race equality information, in line with the Welsh Race Equality Standard.

What we will do to achieve this

- Make sure we carry out equality impact assessments consistently, promptly and to a high standard. This will require an appropriate level of structure, governance and support for staff. We will also educate staff on the benefits of using equality impact assessments to look at how they consider human rights in their work.
- Work with organisations across the NHS to identify and put in place a consistent approach to diversity monitoring.
- Put in place processes to report on Welsh Race Equality Standard indicators.
- Find an effective digital method of bringing together insights, feedback, complaints and compliments and for planning contact with stakeholders, individuals and voluntary and community organisations.

Objective 6: Access to our services and buildings

We will make sure our services are accessible and that they can respond to the different and changing needs of the people who use them. This will include removing physical and other barriers to make sure our buildings, including where we provide our services, are accessible.

We want to communicate with people in ways that encourage them to access and use our services and meet their different needs. We will continue to work to put in place the All Wales Standards for Accessible Communications and Information for People with Sensory Loss and make sure we make reasonable adjustments to provide equal access to our services and events for disabled people. This also includes making sure that people know where to go for information and to get their views heard.

Measures of success

- ✓ We will see engaging with people and communities as a core part of everything we do.
- ✓ Our Approach to Engagement document, which our staff follow, will set out a clear vision and clear outcomes, with clear support for our people.
- ✓ Our services will be designed and built with the people we work with, and with them in mind. Everyone who needs our services will be able to access them easily.
- ✓ We will put a Feedback and Experience framework in place, which will be monitored by the Business Executive Team and the Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee.
- ✓ As part of the Quality and Engagement Act, we will demonstrate in our annual report that we are an organisation that listens and acts, by considering all feedback and using it to make improvements.
- ✓ New and current premises will meet accessibility criteria and follow 'inclusive design principles' (be designed in a way that means everyone can take part in everyday activities). We will have evidence, through agreed principles or a memorandum of understanding (agreement), that we are working well with voluntary and community organisations on shared priorities.

What we will do to achieve this

- Refresh our Approach to Engagement document, making sure it:
 - is clearly aligned to law and policies, for example the Quality and Engagement Act and the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act;
 - reflects how we currently involve people and communities; and
 - is aligned to other related strategies, such as our Digital Strategy.
- Develop services which are based on best practice and reflect people's needs.
- Have a clear and consistent plan for attending public and community events.
- Make sure that public information is fully accessible, through developing an agreed organisational standard.
- Agree a way of working in partnership with the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action (the central body for voluntary and community organisations in Wales), Llais and other relevant bodies.
- Work to make sure all existing and new premises meet the needs of the people who use them.
- Make sure we include everybody, by providing information in digital and non-digital formats.

Monitoring progress

The Chief Executive (as the accountable officer), together with our Board and Executive Team are responsible for making sure we keep to legislation. We will report our progress on this plan regularly to the Executive Team and the People and Organisational Development Committee (a Board committee). We will also meet our legal duty by publishing an annual equality report.

Our success depends on all of our organisation being committed to equality and diversity, supported by developing our staff and keeping to our systems and processes.

Next steps

Talking to our staff and stakeholders has highlighted to us the importance of making sure that this plan does not just sit on a shelf. We will develop a clear and strong plan to help make sure we take positive and prompt action to deliver our objectives.

We will develop and set out our actions over the next few months. We will then present them to the Board and they will be published by 1 April 2024.

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