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Judith Paget  
Director General Health and Social Services/  
NHS Wales Chief Executive  
Health and Social Services Group

Our Ref: TC.200623.JET

20 June 2023

Dear Judith,

### **Public Health Wales Joint Executive Team Meeting**

Thank you for your recent letter inviting us to our end of year Joint Executive Team (JET) meeting on the 27 June 2023. We are looking forward to the opportunity to provide a summary of the year end position, reflecting on our successes and lessons learned, how we responded to the Minister's stated priorities and fulfilled our Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) accountability conditions. We will also provide an overview of our plans for 2023/24, identified risks and the actions in place to mitigate these.

In relation to the Executive Team developments, I am delighted to share that Paul Veysey joined us as the *Board Secretary and Head of the Board Business Unit* on the 17 April. Paul joined us from his role as Solicitor in the Legal and Risk Services in the NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership. Paul brings a wealth of experience with him and has been working closely with us over the last year in relation to the preparations for, and response to, the UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry.

I am also pleased to announce that, following an international search process, Dr Sumina Azam has been substantively appointed as our new *National Director of Policy and International Health, Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre*. This is a pivotal senior national and international public health system leadership role in Wales with responsibility for strategically leading our public health policy development and international health activities.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to our team members who have provided continuity through the year in relation to acting into key executive roles including Angela Jones who was our Acting National Director of Health and Well-being from June 2022, Liz Blayney who was our Acting Board Secretary and Head of the Board Business Unit from January to April and, of course Sumina, who was Acting in her role from December.

As you know, following an international search process, we are in the process of finalising the appointment of our Director of Health and Well Being, and we hope to be in a position to secure the appointment and will be able to announce it at that point.

## **1 Significant Developments/Achievements**

We achieved a number of significant developments during 2022/23 and below provides a highlight of these.

### **1.1 Guide on Action on Fair Work**

In May, we released a guide for local authorities, health boards and other regional and local agencies on improving health, well-being and equity through action on fair work. This builds on previous work which highlighted how the pandemic and associated control measures disrupted working lives, affecting particular groups such as young people, older people, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, women, especially mothers and ethnic minority groups. Access to fair work remains an essential way of improving long term health and well-being of individuals and households, benefiting business and wider community.

### **1.2 Launch of our Behavioural Science Unit**

In May 2022, we launched our new Behavioural Science Unit to improve health and well-being in Wales. This places the excellent work of our behavioural science team on an established footing with the expansion of the team in the formation of a formal Unit. This is a pivotal enabling asset for us, and the wider system, as we engage with the public, professionals and policy-makers in tackling the public health challenges that we face and creating the opportunities for us to engage in a more behaviourally-informed way across the breadth of population groups.

### **1.3 Re-designation of our World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre**

We are delighted to have been re-designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre for a further four years and in May we held a re-designation event. The Centre is the only one in this area of expertise and is part of a global network of more than 800 Collaborating Centres in more than 80 countries. Over the past four years, the Collaborating Centre has worked in close collaboration with the Welsh Government and key stakeholders and partners across Wales, the UK and internationally. The Collaborating Centre has successfully developed practical tools and approaches on

how to invest in a more sustainable way to improve people's well-being, reduce inequity and build stronger, more resilient communities, economies and planet.

The new four-year programme of work for the Centre focuses on providing scientific and policy evidence and expertise to build capacity and implement effective inter-sectoral policies for health and equity across the life course. It also plans to innovate and harness economic and multi-disciplinary tools and approaches to support building an Economy of Well-being in Wales, exploring and identifying solutions to the global challenges of widening health gap and socio-economic disparities, COVID-19 response and recovery and climate change.

We have also hosted a visit of the WHO as part of our strong and close working relationship between Wales and the WHO, and the purpose was to discuss the current work being undertaken between the Welsh Government, Public Health Wales and the WHO under the Memorandum of Understanding that is in place. This was an excellent discussion on the next phase of the Welsh Equity Status Report, taking a public health approach to the cost of living crisis and supporting the NHS to shift to prevention.

## **1.4 Screening Programmes**

### **a) Screening Centre – Mountain Ash**

In July, we opened our first ever screening centre as part of health in the High Street. It is on a high street in Mountain Ash and is a centre where multiple screening programmes operate out of the same venue. It brings together services for three national screening programmes for our population: diabetic eye screening, abdominal aortic aneurysm screening and new-born hearing screening. It has been designed with public accessibility and the health on the High Street concept in mind, making it easier for people to attend screening appointments and the opportunity to be more flexible with times and days if screening appointments. We hope that this new model can be the blueprint for the future of screening in Wales and are now progressing plans for a similar centre in Llanishen.

As with previous developments, the focus was on ensuring that it was environmentally, economically and socially sustainable. This included re-use of carpet tiles and furniture from other Public Health Wales offices, as well as the provision of additional workspace, providing staff with the option to work more locally to home.

### **b) Screening Recovery**

We are still awaiting confirmation of the recovery funding needed for 23/24 and 24/25. We are anticipating £0.979m Welsh Government funding in our position to support the continued recovery plans in Breast Screening and Diabetic Eye Screening. Key updates on the programmes include:

- **Bowel Screening Programme** was fully recovered by October 2021. Uptake levels are at 66% and optimisation of the programme is continuing as planned

with ages 55, 56 and 57 started to be invited from October 2022. Next phase of the optimisation is planned from October 2023.

- **Cervical Screening Programme** was fully recovered by December 2021. A new IT system was implemented in September 2022. A communication campaign was completed in August 2022 to improve understanding about the primary human papillomavirus (HPV) cervical screening test.
- **Breast Screening Programme** recovery is progressing but full recovery will take until 2025. Recovery has been impacted by key clinical staff vacancies, pandemic, and screening mobile breakdowns. The average round length is approximately 44 months. Replacement of digital equipment and 11 screening mobiles was completed as planned by the end of March 2023, which has supported recovery plans.
- **Wales Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm screening** the programme was fully recovered by the end of March 2023. Compared to pre-pandemic levels, activity and uptake is higher and people not attending booked appointments is lower.
- **Diabetic Eye Screening Programme** has not yet recovered the delay due to the pandemic. This programme remains the most challenging programme to recover due to the very large and continually increasing eligible population. A substantial transformation programme is underway to enable recovery and establish a sustainable service model.
- **Antenatal, Newborn Hearing and Newborn Bloodspot programmes** were not paused and continue to deliver in line with high performance standards.

## 1.5 National Trauma Practice Framework

Our Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Hub Wales and Traumatic Stress Wales launched the Wales Trauma Practice Framework in July. The framework sets out an all-society approach to support a coherent, consistent approach to developing and implementing trauma-informed practice across Wales providing the best possible support to those that need it most. The next steps will be to develop the implementation plan for this work, which is already informing the new Welsh Government mental health strategy, and the next phase of our ACEs plan for Wales, in collaboration with the Welsh Government.

## 1.6 Local Public Health Team Transfer

On the 30 September, we completed the transfer of employment of our Local Public Health Team staff to their respective health boards. The transfer project was to respond to the system-wide challenges we face around the long-term impact on population health and to subsequently support the health boards and wider system to address this. Our staff in the Local Public Health Teams have been exceptional in their commitment and expertise to public health in Wales over many years, and particularly over the last few years when the COVID-19 pandemic required our team

members to be pivotal public health leaders at a local, regional and national level. The new arrangement will enable us to collectively develop a stronger, more integrated specialist public health system at every level in Wales.

### **1.7 Refurbishment of North Wales Offices**

Our offices in Clwydian House, Wrexham, have recently completed a refurbishment, which forms part of the Our Space North Wales Project. We were keen to ensure that our staff were central to the design of the space and they were consulted on what sort of space they wanted and were able to input on the layout and design process. Ideas included sustainable light, bright place to work, a heating and cooling system with formal and informal meeting spaces. An important aspect was to ensure that furniture and carpets were sustainably procured, and bike racks and a shower installed to facilitate green travel.

### **1.8 Attendance at the Welsh Government Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee**

In February 2023, Cheryl Williams and Nerys Edmonds, Principal Health Impact Assessment Officers in our Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, gave a presentation to the Welsh Government Flood and Coastal Erosion Committee. They were invited to the Committee to talk about the impact of flooding on population health and well-being, and also the potential impact upon healthcare service provision. The presentation focused initially on the broader aspects of the impact of the wider determinants, and the built and natural environment on health and well-being, before focusing more specifically on how flood events affect individuals and population groups. Much of the information presented to the Committee was taken from our Climate Change Health Impact Assessment which is being finalised. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to hear more about the implications of flooding on health and also how health impact assessments can help in the process of assessing those impacts.

### **1.9 Our Approach to the Cost of Living Crisis**

We accelerated our work as an organisation on how we supported and helped to mitigate the implications of the cost of living crisis in Wales. We established an internal, cross organisational group focusing on what we could do to support our staff and also to support the public, partners and the Welsh Government.

We worked closely with Government officials in different policy areas to identify areas where we could best support. In addition, we co-chaired a roundtable workshop with the World Health Organization's (WHO) Regions for Health Network on the cost of living crisis on the 21 September 2022. This explored the challenges, opportunities and possible solutions. The output of the event fed into discussions at the 27th Annual Meeting of the WHO Regions for Health Network, 5-7 December 2022 in Brussels, and the WHO/Europe Solutions Forum on Health in the Well-being Economy, 1-2 March 2023 in Copenhagen.

On the 15 November, our WHO Collaborating Centre, with support from colleagues in other parts of the organisation, published a report on the *Cost of living crisis in Wales: A public health lens. Yr argyfwng costau byw yng Nghymru: Drwy lens iechyd cyhoeddus*

The report summarised the ways in which the cost of living crisis can impact on health and well-being. It takes a public health lens to identify actions for policy makers and decision-makers to protect and promote health and well-being in their response to the crisis, outlining what a public health approach to the crisis could look like. It does this by making recommendations for action in the short and longer-term.

Sumina Azam, our interim National Director of Policy and International Health Head of Policy, attended a Cabinet Sub-Committee on the 7 November to present on the report, and also gave excellent interviews following considerable media coverage about the publication of the report. Sumina is now a member of an Expert Group on the cost of living crisis reporting to the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

### **1.10 All Wales Cost of Living Summit: Working together to Build a Healthier Wales**

Over 180 delegates from across Wales joined the All-Wales cost of living summit on the 13 March 2023 that was jointly organised by the Building a Healthier Wales Coordination Group and Public Health Wales. The Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt, MS, addressed senior leaders and public advocates at the summit. The summit focussed on collaboration to the prevent short, medium and long-term harms of the cost of living crisis. Delegates also heard about the public health implications and context from Professor Sir Michael Marmot and Public Health Wales staff.

Delegates participated in 13 breakout sessions, covering themes relating to housing, energy, mental wellbeing, income, employment, health and care services. Together, they considered examples of good practice, the barriers and enablers to effective response and future opportunities and actions to make a difference. Through the conference many examples of good practice, were recognised with clear opportunities to work together, combine efforts and reduce duplication, taking a long term approach to get the best outcomes for the people of Wales.

The output of the summit has been fed into the Expert Group (mentioned above) and the Building a Healthier Wales Coordination Group will consider the findings to guide their future work on the cost of living crisis.

### **1.11 Public Health Wales Young Ambassadors**

Over thirty Public Health Wales 'Young Ambassadors' from across Wales attended a Public Health Wales Young Person's Board Partnership Forum and additional sessions on the 22 and 23 February 2023. The main theme of the session was a discussion on the cost of living crisis with input provided. The Young Ambassadors shared their views with members of Public Health Wales' Board, about how the crisis is impacting young people at home, in school and work settings and in their communities, sharing

their lived experiences to show what matters to people their age and how things can be improved.

Together, they identified their emerging priorities for Public Health Wales to influence the Welsh Government, local authorities and the NHS. Early themes identified were:

- Improving mental health support and counselling in communities for all ages.
- Having a more equal experience of transport, food provision in schools and colleges, financial support for uniforms and equipment. We heard there was a lot of variation across Wales in terms of their experiences of support available in school, college and work.
- More communication between schools, hospitals, local authorities and other organisations were needed.

The Board Partnership Forum was part of a two-day Young Ambassadors residential, which included sessions on our Long Term Strategy and young people and vaccines. The young people also took part in training about meetings styles and how to chair a meeting to provide skills to build confidence when working in partnership with the Board. They also became Disease Detectives in an interactive session on how Public Health Wales solves outbreak riddles.

### **1.12 Health and Care Research Wales Impact Award**

Our research into unpaid carers was awarded the Health and Care Research Wales Impact Award, 2022. The Research and Evaluation Division, in collaboration with Swansea University, brought together anonymous primary care data and the National Survey for Wales, to generate a unique cohort of over 62,000 unpaid carers in Wales, and describe the health needs of this group. The research found that unpaid carers have markedly poorer health than the general population in Wales. However, being in paid, secure employment and/or education whilst caring for others is associated with higher well-being amongst unpaid carers.

At the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that there were over 700,000 unpaid carers in Wales. However, due to the lack of a systematic data collection on unpaid carers, it is difficult to know the true number of unpaid carers in Wales, and to understand their health needs. This research has helped to address that knowledge gap.

The findings have helped shape the Strategy for unpaid carers: delivery plan 2021 <https://gov.wales/strategy-unpaid-carers-delivery-plan-2021-html#section-83608> and the Welsh Government's Strategy for unpaid carers delivery plan: children's rights, equality and Welsh language impact assessments, where our reports have been referenced as evidence in recognising the barriers experienced by young carers.

### **1.13 Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) Cymru Awards**

We were thrilled that our People and Organisation Development Team won two awards at the Healthcare People Management Association (HPMA) Cymru Conference

and Awards Ceremony on the 1 March 2023. The awards celebrate the incredible work that is ongoing throughout NHS Wales. The two awards were the Excellence in Organisational Development and Workforce Analytics.

The Excellence in Organisational Development award recognised the design, implementation and evaluation of *Work How It Works Best*, and how the pilot has significantly benefited the organisation. *Work How it Works Best* is a twelve-month pilot developed by us following extensive engagement with staff across the organisation. It enables individuals and teams across the organisation, to collectively decide how, when and where they work best, taking into account the needs of the work, the needs and wants of team members and the team as a whole.

The award for Workforce Analytics highlighted how our Performance Assurance Dashboard and Directorate and Divisional Dashboards in the organisation have improved the data literacy of decision-makers, prioritised improvement activities, and evaluated interventions relating to our people.

Both awards have been the result of a real team effort and we are proud of the impact and difference that both our *Work How It Works Best* and the Workforce Dashboards is having across the organisation.

## **2 Additional Areas of Focus**

### **2.1 UK COVID-19 Public Inquiry**

With the approval in June 2022 of the final version of the Terms of Reference for the UK-wide COVID-19 Public Inquiry, our internal preparations were accelerated and continue to ensure that we are ready to respond to, and provide, any information the Inquiry requests in an open and transparent manner. Whilst being extremely challenging, we have mobilised additional support to ensure that we are prepared for the current, multiple requirements on us and the next stages.

We are currently core participants in Modules 1 and 2B and have submitted two rule 9 witness statements for Module 1, multiple rule 9 witness statements for 2B and responded to a series of questionnaires for 2B. In addition, whilst not being a core participant for Module 3, we are currently responding to a rule 9 witness statement for this Module and we are providing a detailed response to a rule 9 request for information relating to procurement for Module 5.

### **2.2 NHS Executive**

The NHS Executive was officially established on the 1 April 2023 and consists of the former hosted entities of NHS Wales Health Collaborative, NHS Wales Finance Delivery Unit along with NHS Wales Delivery Unit, that was previously hosted by Swansea Bay University Health Board. A Hosting Agreement for the NHS Executive was agreed between Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government in January 2023 and, in addition, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was agreed in March 2023 between Public Health Wales and the Welsh Government for the next 12 months in



relation to Improvement Cymru, this sets out arrangements during the first year of operation as they move to full integration within the NHS Executive on the 1 April 2024.

The programme to establish the NHS Executive was led by the Welsh Government. It involved the substantial support of colleagues from Public Health Wales in our Finance, People and Organisational Development, Information Governance and Risk, IT/Digital, Improvement Cymru and Communications Teams to enable the establishment and this support continues. I would like to thank all of our people for the leadership and support in this work.

From April 2023, the Board will receive assurance on compliance with the terms of the hosting agreement, through the production of an Annual Assurance Statement and Report from the NHS Executive. This will be reported through the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee. There is further work to do in relation to the provision of assurance by the NHS Executive regarding the systems and processes it has in place for compliance with statutory and mandated policy requirements and these discussions will continue over the coming months.

### **2.3 Our New Long Term Strategy**

I am delighted that we have launched our new Long Term Strategy – *Working Together for a Healthier Wales, 2023 - 2035*. In developing the Strategy, we have listened to the voices of stakeholders, our staff and the public. I am grateful for the contributions that Welsh Government colleagues have made in the development of the Strategy and to all our people across the organisation, and we now look forward to continuing to work with partners on its implementation.

The Strategy, and its six strategic priorities, outlines how we will be working towards a Wales where people live longer, healthier lives and where all people in Wales have fair and equal access to the things that lead to good health and wellbeing. With our partners, we aim to increase healthy life expectancy, improve health and wellbeing, and reduce inequalities for everyone in Wales, now and for future generations.

Finally, I would like to thank our exceptionally talented and committed staff throughout the organisation who continue to go above and beyond to protect and improve health and well-being for people in Wales and, of course, the ongoing strong leadership of Executive and Non-Executive colleagues in these challenging times. I would also like to thank you, and all of our Welsh Government colleagues who we continue to work closely with, for all your support during yet another busy and challenging year.

I am sure we will have the opportunity to discuss many of the areas highlighted above during our JET meeting. I have enclosed our JET submission and supporting papers which include our end-year performance report. I look forward to our discussions on the 27 June and please let me know if you require any further information in advance of the meeting.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Tracey Cooper**  
**Chief Executive**

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb yn Gymraeg heb oedi  
We welcome correspondence in Welsh. We will respond in Welsh without delay