

Draft Minutes: 23-05 (26 July 2023)

Members:

Medwin Hughes	Chair
Grace Quantock	Deputy Chair
Bamidele Adenipekun	Non-Executive
Jack Evershed	Non-Executive
Karen Lewis	Non-Executive
Rajan Madhok	Non-Executive
Jason Smith	Non-Executive
Alyson Thomas	Chief Executive

Attendees:

Ben Eaton	Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement
Sharon Walters	Business Manager
Geoff Ryall-Harvey	Regional Director, Llais, North Wales region

Meeting opening

Welcome and introductions, declarations of interest and apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Barbara Harrington, Angela Mutlow and Ceri Sullivan.
- 1.3 Jason Smith informed the Board that he was no longer a Trustee for Cymorth Cymru. The declaration of interest register would be updated to reflect this change. Subject to this amendment, the declaration of interest register was agreed as being accurate and up to date. There were no conflicts of interest raised in relation to the items for discussion.

A23-05-01: Update the declaration of interest register for Jason Smith.

Minutes of the last meeting & matters arising

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2023 were agreed as a true record of the meeting. The Board discussed the use of acronyms and agreed that they would no longer be used in Board minutes. Instead, they would be written in full so that it was clear to the reader. The only exceptions would be those acronyms such as NHS which were used by the general public.
- 2.2 The Board actions and decision log were presented, and a number of actions were closed. These were: A22-01-05, A22-01-22, A22-01-23, A22-02-04, A22-02-05, A22-03-05, A23-01-02, A23-01-09, A23-01-12, A23-02-02, A23-03-01, A23-03-02, A23-03-03, A23-03-04, A23-03-05, A23-03-06, A23-03-07, A23-03-10, A23-03-11, A23-03-14, A23-03-15, A23-03-16, A23-03-17, A23-04-01, A23-04-02, A23-04-03, A23-04-04.
- The Board discussed the remaining outstanding actions and an update was provided.
- 2.3 Since the last formal meeting two decisions had been taken out of committee. These were agreement of:
- DooC-07: the final version of the Non-Executives Ambassadorial role description
 - DooC-08: the Board's workplan for the remainder of 2023/24
- 2.4 The Board was informed that there had been a number of unanticipated issues with the establishment of the Llais IT systems. 2 regional offices and the national team had moved over to the new system, but the remaining regional offices would be delayed until the issues were resolved. It was expected that the transfer of the remaining regional offices would be completed by mid-August. The Board noted the expected timeline and asked that this be kept under active review.
- 2.5 The Board noted that marketing materials produced by Welsh Government on behalf of Llais had been revised and were being finalised by the design team. Once received, the documents would be printed and distributed to all Llais regional offices to be used to support their engagement with the public and stakeholders.

- 2.6 The Board was informed that progress with recruiting and inducting volunteers had been slower than anticipated, mainly due to obtaining the necessary security clearance. The Chair asked for an update at the next board meeting, outlining the current position and how volunteers were being supported.
- 2.7 The Board heard that work was underway at a regional level to be more accessible to people and extend our reach into local community-based activities through planned outreach, e.g., in public libraries. Board members noted that the locations chosen for outreach activities would need to be suitable to deliver the services we offered, e.g., confidential spaces for complaints advocacy work.

A23-05-02: The Board noted the expected timeline with the establishment of the Llais IT systems and asked that this was kept under review.

A23-05-03: Provide update to the Board on progress with appointing and supporting volunteers.

Reports

Report from the Chair

- 3.1 The Chair provided an update on recent activity.
- 3.2 The Chair informed the Board that as Llais Board meetings would take place at different locations across Wales, each meeting would include an item to focus on the region in which the meeting was held. As we were in North Wales, the regional director for North Wales had joined the meeting and would present an item covering Llais activities and the key health and social care matters affecting the region.
- 3.3 The Chair marked the end of the first 100 days of operations and extended his gratitude to Llais colleagues for their hard work during that period. A full report would be provided later in the meeting. The Chair informed the Board that an annual plan for the remainder of the financial year would be developed over the coming months, this would provide an appropriate framework within which Llais would deliver its priorities.

- 3.4 The Chair went on to say that as a new statutory body, Llais was keen to establish a wide range of stakeholder networks and it was important that we develop these as early as possible.

Chief Executive's report

- 4.1 The Chief Executive provided an update on recent activity.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive noted with sadness the recent passing of Clare Clements, a much-loved member of staff in the Cardiff & Vale region. Prior to working for the Community Health Councils, Clare had been a valued CHC member for 10 years. Staff at Cardiff & Vale were being supported during this difficult time and had access to the staff counselling service.
- 4.3 Congratulations were offered to the Llais Chair for being honoured by His Majesty the King in the 2023 Birthday Honours List, having been made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, (C.B.E.) for service to education and the Welsh language.
- 4.4 Engagement with key stakeholders and partners continues. In particular, the Co-Production Network had worked with Llais to facilitate public and stakeholder engagement on our strategic vision, priorities and ways of working. This had involved a series of on-line sessions as well as a national survey. The regions were also using the opportunity during face-to-face activities to encourage feedback.
- 4.5 The Chief Executive had also met with a range of stakeholder organisations to promote Llais, to develop arrangements for regular engagement and to explore opportunities for collaboration, including on potential areas of common interest. This included the following meetings with:
- professional regulators the General Medical Council, and the Nursing & Midwifery Council
 - the inspectorates Care Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

- the Older People’s Commissioner and her team to talk about older peoples experience of primary care services, particularly GP services
 - the Chair and the Welsh Language Commissioner and her team. They talked about the development of Llais’s services as well as the use of the Welsh language in the delivery of health and social care services. They also talked about the importance of working with the Commissioner so that Llais can find ways to support more Welsh speaking volunteers
 - Healthwatch England to talk about sharing good practice and learning from each other, cross border arrangements and health and social care matters affecting people at a UK level. Similar discussions are planned with colleagues in Scotland and Ireland to identify how we can work effectively together.
- 4.6 The Chief Executive and Bami Adenipekun attended the recent 75th anniversary Bevan Commission conference. Bami had represented Llais in a panel discussion, and Llais facilitated a number of breakout sessions to talk about making sure people’s voices are heard in the design and development of health and social care services for the future.
- 4.7 The Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services continue to meet with Llais regional offices. They have visited offices in North Wales, West Wales and Gwent and further visits were planned. These would also involve other senior Llais staff including the Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement.
- 4.8 Discussions have continued with Welsh Government representatives around sponsorship arrangements. The Chief Executive had received her Accounting Officer letter. This formally designated the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer from 1 April 2023. The letter would be shared with the Board and published on the Llais website.
- 4.9 The Chief Executive advised the Board that there had been some recruitment challenges, particularly in some specialist areas. The workforce team were working with recruitment agencies to find suitable candidates to fill a range of roles on a temporary basis until permanent appointments could be made.

4.10 The Board talked about the development of organisational key performance indicators and Board members noted that the timing for the development of key performance indicators would link to the organisation's strategic and operational plans. Data collection arrangements would coincide with the introduction of the customer relationship management system. This would mean that a full set of key performance indicators could be developed for the 2024-2025 reporting year. It was agreed that a paper on key performance indicators for 2023-2024 would be presented to the Board at its October meeting, alongside the draft Annual Plan.

4.11 The Board asked what we were hearing about social care. The Chief Executive advised that through our engagement activities, we have heard about a range of challenges, including difficulties in accessing domiciliary care and respite care, the impact of workforce shortages and the connectivity between health and social care services.

4.12 The Board was advised that the complaints advocacy service had begun dealing with social care complaints, some of which were complex in nature.

A23-05-04: Share Accounting Officer designation letter with the Board and publish on the Llais website.

A23-05-05: Present item to the Board on proposed key performance indicators for the 2023-2024 annual plan at its October meeting.

Report from Board Committees

5.1 It was noted that the Llais committee chairs would provide reports on committee business and matters at each of the Board meetings in public. This would mean that the full Board is kept up to date. A summary of committee business will be discussed in a public forum and captured in the minutes of the Board, which may be accessed by members of the public.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee report

5.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair informed the Board that the committee met for the first time on the 5 July 2023. The focus

of the meeting was on the committee arrangements, including the agreement of its workplan for the remainder of the financial year.

- 5.3 The Board was informed that the tender process for an internal audit service was underway. A panel would convene in August 2023 to consider the bids received before putting forward a recommendation to the Committee on the most suitable supplier.
- 5.4 The Committee was presented with the draft corporate risk register for consideration. The committee was broadly content with the risks identified, mitigating actions and risk scoring. Some presentational changes were suggested. The Committee would have sight of the corporate risk register again before it is shared with the Board for approval.
- 5.5 The Board Chair thanked the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair for the update and noted the current position.

Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee

- 5.6 There was no update from the committee. The committee would meet for the first time over the coming months.

Our first 100 days report

- 6.1 A draft report was presented to the Board for consideration and approval ahead of publication. The draft report summarised the actions taken, and progress made by Llais to deliver on the commitments set out in 'Our first 100 days'. The Board was informed that once the report was finalised a summary and easy read version would be produced for publication.
- 6.2 The Chief Executive thanked colleagues for their support in helping to deliver these commitments.
- 6.3 The need to provide information in other community languages was discussed. The Chief Executive informed the Board that some Llais publications were available in the top 10 most used languages, but further work would be done with community groups to gather feedback on what other languages are needed.
- 6.4 The Board noted and approved the 'Our first 100 days' report.

A23-05-06: Produce summary and easy read version of the ‘Our first 100 days’ report for publication.

D23-05-01: The Board agreed the ‘Our first 100 days’ report for publication and distribution.

Financial plan 2023-24

- 7.1 The Board received a paper outlining the draft financial plan for 2023/24 for approval. It was noted that the Board had discussed the financial plan at an informal session earlier in July 2023.
- 7.2 The financial plan was structured over 4 key elements:
- Financial plan requirements – financial duty
 - Welsh Government funding letter
 - Income budgets
 - Expenditure budgets
- 7.3 The Board was informed that the Welsh Government funding letter confirmed a total resource budget of £7,307,000 for 2023-2024 financial year. This was an additional investment of £2.653m up from the CHC baseline of £4.653m. The additional funding was to cover the additional costs associated with its status as a as a standalone Welsh Government Sponsored Body, and to effectively fulfil its broader duties under the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement)(Wales) Act.
- 7.4 It was noted that some budget lines in 2023/2024 were reduced by 25% to take into account that Llais is a new organisation that is recruiting additional staff resource, all of which were unlikely to be in place by July 2023 but where full year funding would be required in future years.
- 7.5 The Board was advised that further forecasting work was needed for the 2023-2024 budget which would require further consideration by the Board later in the year.
- 7.6 The Board was informed that there was £0.2m unallocated within the balanced plan. Welsh Government was aware of this potential

underspend and it would be jointly monitored by Llais and the Welsh Government Partnership Team.

7.7 The Board asked for an update on recruitment. Members were informed that Llais roles were advertised via the NHS recruitment platform 'Trac'. Llais was also promoting vacancies via the Llais website, social media channels and targeted distribution through public sector networks, including those providing access to underrepresented groups.

7.8 The Board noted and formally approved the draft Financial Plan 2023-2024.

D23-05-02: The Board noted and formally approved the draft Financial Plan 2023-2024.

Health and social care in North Wales region

8.1 Geoff Ryall-Harvey, Regional Director of Llais, North Wales region provided the Board with an update on health and social care services in North Wales, and the activities and priorities set for the region.

8.2 The Regional Director provided an overview of the region, its health board and local authorities. Some key areas of concern for the North Wales population were highlighted, including:

- Controversial plans to move the air ambulance base in North Wales from Caernarfon to Denbigh
- The return to Special Measures for the health board, and the impact on public confidence in the health board, which remains low
- Mental health services once again forming part of the Special Measures framework.
- difficulties in accessing some GP surgeries and access to NHS dental services being virtually impossible in large parts of the region.
- feedback shared with the former Community Health Council about the pain and suffering caused by long waits. People's experiences included living with depression, money and employment difficulties and relationship break-ups.

- The impact of the Tawel Fan failings, some 10 years on from the allegations about the ill-treatment of people living with dementia.
- On-going issues with vascular services in North Wales, including a lack of clarity on care pathways and concerns around clinical leadership.

The Board heard that the recruitment and retention of clinical staff remained a key area of risk for the health board.

The Regional Director advised the Board that he and his team were building relationships with the social care sector, and meetings had taken place with a number of Directors of Social Services. These had been helpful in developing an understanding of the issues and challenges facing the sector.

The Regional Director went on to summarise the key priorities identified by stakeholders and shared with the former Community Health Council. These were:

- Referral to treatment times (RTT)
- BCUHB Targeted Intervention Framework – *now Special Measures again*
- Mental health services
- Vascular services, including diabetic foot pathway
- Primary care (*with particular focus on access to GP and dental services*)
- Care and services delivered in Emergency Departments
- Ophthalmology services
- Community hospitals and minor Injury Units
- Delayed Transfers of Care
- Regional Treatment Centres – now cancelled by Welsh Government
- BCUHB Digital Strategy
- Equality, Diversity and Human Rights
- Welsh language.

The Board also received an update on the North Wales team's involvement in service change proposals since January 2023; the extension of the complaints advocacy service to include social services complaints; and the public engagement programme so far. This had provided an opportunity to raise awareness and understanding of Llais, and to hear from people about their health and social care services.

The Board thanked the Regional Director, colleagues and volunteers for a comprehensive update on issues affecting the North Wales region.

The Board noted that 2 key intervention areas for Llais should be the relentless focus on what's important to people who use services, and how we need to be an organisation that makes a difference.

What people want from Llais: Developing our strategic vision, mission and priorities together

- 9.1 A paper was presented to the Board providing an overview of feedback received from our targeted engagement exercise facilitated by the Co-Production Network. The paper also included some suggested ways that Llais could respond to the feedback received from the public, and next steps in developing our strategic vision, mission and values.
- 9.2 The Board noted that Llais had worked with the Co-production Network to deliver a number of regional online workshop events, a national survey and the offer of one-to-one and group conversations. Materials were also provided to support groups to hold their own discussions and feedback directly to us. Events were promoted widely on social media and via the Llais website. Llais staff and volunteers also raised awareness and encouraged feedback through meetings and at face-to-face engagement events. 2 further workshops would be held in the near future.
- 9.3 Once all engagement activities were complete, a full analysis and final report would be produced and shared with the Board.
- 9.4 A number of potential barriers to involvement were identified during the engagement events carried out to date. This learning would be used to inform the arrangements for future events.
- 9.5 The Board noted that although the first phase of engagement would come to an end on 31 July, engagement is key to the delivery of Llais's functions and so would be ongoing.

- 9.6 The Board talked about the importance of proactively providing information in a range of community languages, including British Sign Language. It was noted that people would be more likely to respond if a range of community languages were provided as standard.
- 9.7 The Board asked about the Llais marketing campaign and coverage within health and social care settings, including, e.g. information available in pharmacies or GP surgeries. The Board was reassured that although the initial campaign had come to an end, there will be a continuous programme of promotion for Llais, including promotion activities agreed in partnership with NHS bodies and local authorities.

Our ways of working: Code of practice on access to premises and engagement with individuals

- 10.1 A paper was presented outlining that work was now underway to support the implementation of the code of practice on access to premises and engagement with individuals following its publication by Welsh Government.
- 10.2 Welsh Government conducted a formal consultation with Llais on the code of practice on access to premises and engagement with individuals. Llais had formally responded to the consultation and further amendments were subsequently made by Welsh Government to the code prior to its publication.
- 10.3 The Board noted that engagement with social care providers had begun across the regions to introduce Llais and talk about our remit, including visiting to hear from people while they are accessing services. This work would inform our learning, and the development of our national standards for engagement, including visiting.

Appointment of independent members to the Board's committees

- 11.1 The Board received a paper asking for approval to appoint 2 independent members with financial and legal experience to support the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) in its role in providing assurance to the Board and Accounting Officer.

11.2 The committee had discussed the matter at its meeting in July 2022 and identified the skills they thought were needed to make sure the committee could carry out its work effectively.

11.3 The Board agreed to appoint 2 independent members to the committee with financial and legal experience.

A23-05-07: Appoint 2 independent members to the committee with financial and legal expertise.

Board associate member appointment update

12.1 The Board received an update on the timeline for the appointment of an Associate Member. It was noted that the timeline had slipped due to the ongoing engagement that was taking place with trade unions. Given that this would be the first Llais Associate Member appointment, it was important that all comments and suggestions were properly considered. The next steps would be to consult Llais staff on the terms of appointment for the role.

12.2 Llais had hoped to appoint an individual to this post in time for the July board meeting but due to the ongoing engagement, the appointment would not be made until the next public Board meeting.

Any other business

13.1 No further business was raised.

Forward look

14.1 The Board noted the forward look.

Questions from the public

15.1 The Board noted that members of the public had sent some questions in to the Board to answer at the meeting. The Chief Executive shared the questions with the Board, and provided a response.

15.2 **Question**

Substance misuse is a subject that often goes under the radar when health and social care performance is scrutinised. What plans therefore do the Llais Board have to engage with the Area Planning Boards and Public Health Wales to get a better understanding how their not inconsiderable budgets are utilised to deliver the most effective treatment and harm reduction services to one of the most marginalised and voiceless groups in society?

Response

We are currently working with the public and other organisations to help us identify our plans and priorities for the future – our plans will have a clear focus on helping to make sure people and groups that are often marginalised do not go unheard.

As part of this process, we will be finding out more from other bodies about their plans to develop, review or follow up on previous activity aimed at improving services. We know, for example, that Care Inspectorate Wales and Healthcare Inspectorate Wales have previously raised concerns in their review of substance misuse services in Wales and want to hear how its recommended actions have made a difference. The information we gather will help us to decide our actions.

15.3 Question

We hear many complaints from patients who find the availability of prescriptions to be a problem. Many receiving medication for serious conditions are finding the prescription drugs to be unavailable. How much of a problem is this and what is/can be done about this and can Llais raise the issue on a national level with ministers.

Response

We know from the work of the former Community Health Councils that people have raised concerns in recent years about the availability of some medications, such as HRT and antibiotics. The former Community Health Councils raised these matters with the Welsh Government at the time.

Llais will similarly raise concerns with Welsh Ministers where national action is needed to respond to matters affecting people's access and experience of health and social care services.

Since Llais became operational in April 2023, some regions have reported continuing concerns about access to medications, although

these have not been consistently heard in all parts of Wales or in relation to any particular medication.

We know how worrying, stressful, and potentially harmful it is for people when they are unable to get their medication easily, where and when they need it. Our staff will be meeting with a range of organisations involved in pharmacy services in the coming weeks and will take the opportunity to find out more about this important issue.

15.4 Question

In view of the evidence provided by Mark Drakeford and Vaughan Gethin at the UK Covid Inquiry that has clearly shown that Wales was not prepared for any pandemic prior to Covid in 2019.

In view of the revelation, what action has Llais undertaken with Welsh Government and Health Boards to seek confirmation that there are now robust planning structures in place that will ensure the lack of preparedness for Covid will not be repeated when the next pandemic occurs?

If you have been in communication on this issue, are you able to assure the population of Wales that their necessary health needs in a pandemic will be suitably provided for.

Response

Our role at Llais is to help make sure that people's views and experiences of health and social care services are listened to and acted upon by decision makers.

As the UK inquiry carries out its important work, we are working to make sure the voices of people living in Wales helps the inquiry understand how the pandemic impacted our lives – so that its investigations clearly identify the lessons that need to be learned for the future.

So far, we have sent evidence to the UK inquiry of the things the former Community Health Councils were hearing from people through the different stages of the pandemic, as set out in a range of national reports. Work is underway to prepare and submit further evidence incorporating people's reflections of the impact of the pandemic.

As the inquiry moves forward with its work and reports on its findings, we will work to help make sure health and social care services take action in response, so that it is better prepared for the future.

15.5 Question

Why is Llais not being open and transparent with the public by not following the communication methods used by Health Boards and Local Authorities by publishing all meeting information online in advance of meetings?

Response

Being inclusive, trustworthy, and transparent is important to us.

As a new organisation we want to try and do things a bit differently, and in a way that makes the best use of our resources. So, we want to work with you to figure out the best way to involve you in our activities in a way that is inclusive. This includes our Board meetings.

We know that sharing information through formal Board papers isn't the most inclusive way of sharing information about the things our Board is doing and the decisions we are making. So, while we heard from you about the best ways of doing this, and as we are still settling in our new organisation, we asked that if you wanted the Board papers, you could contact us, and we would send them to you.

We have heard that it is important to you that we make our Board papers more easily available on our website, instead of on request. We have now done this.

As we are a new organisation, and as we work with you to think about how best to do things, we might get things wrong. We're sorry that our decision not to publish our Board papers caused concern. We will continue to listen to what you tell us and act as a result.

We want to hear your ideas and suggestions about the most accessible ways to share what the Board does in future. We want to hear what you think are the best ways of holding our Board meetings, including how we can use digital, IT and video to help people find out about and get involved, even if you cannot attend in person.

15.6 As well as questions sent in advance, members of the public attending the Board meeting were asked to raise any questions with the Board. One member of the public asked whether Llais would support HM Coroner's call for a public inquiry into vascular services.

- 15.7 The Board decided that it needed to receive further information about vascular services in North Wales. It was agreed that the North Wales Regional Director would provide a more detailed briefing so that Llais can determine its next steps.
- 15.8 The Board noted the importance of ensuring that the people and their families who had been directly affected by the failures in vascular services should have answers to their questions and concerns, and that the improvements needed were being taken forward as quickly as possible.
- 15.9 The Board also heard from a person who shared his experience of waiting for treatment for sleep apnoea, the impact on his health and the importance of those responsible for the health service to be held to account.
- 15.10 Another person asked why there wasn't a health regulator in Wales, as there was in England. The Chief Executive advised that Healthcare Inspectorate Wales is the independent regulator of independent healthcare and the inspector of NHS care in Wales.

A23-05-08: The North Wales Regional Director to provide a more detailed briefing on vascular services in North Wales to enable Llais to determine next steps.

15.11 The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting closed.