



Board Assurance Framework

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Overview and scope of the document

The Llais Board Assurance Framework serves to act as a key mechanism to provide the Board with confidence that the organisation is effectively working towards its strategic goals and is clear about the risks to the non-delivery of these strategic goals. It focuses on the achievement of the **Llais 3-year strategy** and supporting annual plans. The **annual plans** detail the goals and objectives for the organisation, department and teams over a 12-month period. These plans seek to bring into effect the vision of the Llais Strategy. Annual Plans will be required to be agreed by the Board by the 31 March of each year.

This framework also seeks to provide an approach and reporting to the Board, through which the Board can:

- ❖ understand that it is adhering to its values, legal obligations and undertakings; and
- ❖ demonstrate sound and good governance through its systems, behaviours and processes i.e., that it is doing the right things in the right way for the right reasons.

This framework also provides an overview of the system of governance and assurance of Llais by outlining the structures, processes and sources of information and assurance that the Board should expect to see and receive from both inside and outside the organisation.

Through this network of governance and assurance arrangements and reporting, the Board will be able to make determinations about:

- ❖ the adequacy and appropriateness of the day-to-day management of the organisation, as directed by the Chief Executive (Accounting Officer);
- ❖ the delegation arrangements that are in place; and
- ❖ whether or not the Board is on track to meet its stated strategy and objectives.

It will also assist and enable the Board in giving assurance to its partners, Welsh Government and the people of Wales regarding its progress against its roles and responsibilities and agreed objectives.

It should also help in demonstrating that the Board is committed to excellence in all that it does and will be accountable, open and

transparent in all its decisions and activities on behalf of and with the active involvement of the people of Wales.

The framework outlines and encompasses the following key areas:

1. Strategic alignment:

- Assurance that all activities and initiatives are aligned with the strategic priorities outlined in the 3-year strategy and associated annual plans and the risk of their non-delivery.
- The systems for regular monitoring of progress against key performance indicators, risk and expected outcomes and the ways this is openly reported.
- The mechanisms in place to identify and address any deviations from the 3-year strategy and annual plans and their agreed objectives and priorities.

2. Values and behaviours:

- Assurance that the organisation's culture and operations embody the stated values of being people-driven, working together, and acting with integrity.
- Mechanisms are in place to assess and promote adherence to these values at all levels of the organisation and that this can be demonstrated inside the organisation and publicly.
- Policies and processes developed to promote culture and behaviours and that robust arrangements are in place to manage and remedy any behaviours or approaches that contradict these values.

3. Legal, regulatory compliance and standards:

- Assurance that Llais is fulfilling its legal duties and responsibilities as outlined in relevant legislation and regulations and meeting national and organisationally set standards.
- How regular reviews are undertaken to ensure compliance with evolving legal and regulatory requirements and health and social services/organisational standards.
- The processes in place to identify and mitigate any legal and compliance risks and where agreed standards are not being met.

4. Financial sustainability and governance:

- Assurance that public funds are being used appropriately, efficiently and effectively.
- That robust financial controls and reporting mechanisms are in place and operating effectively.
- That there is adherence to good governance practices and transparency in decision-making and operations.
- That regular reviews of internal processes and systems to ensure efficiency and effectiveness are undertaken by the organisation, its internal auditors and external auditors and the organisation acts in timely ways on the recommendations of these reviews

5. Stakeholder engagement and impact:

- Assurance that Llais is effectively engaging with stakeholders at local, regional, and national levels.
- That mechanisms have been developed to measure and demonstrate the impact of Llais's work on improving health and social care services and representing the voice of the people of Wales in these services.
- Processes are in place to gather and respond to feedback from stakeholders and report that as appropriate.

6. Risk management:

- Assurance that a comprehensive risk management framework is in place to identify, assess, and mitigate risks that could impact on the achievement of strategic goals, organisational requirements and delivery and that this has been developed and is functioning appropriately.
- That regular reviews of risk registers and risk mitigation plans take place, and appropriate reporting takes place within the organisation and to the Board and its committees.

7. Organisational development:

- Assurance that Llais is continuously improving as an organisation and that this can be clearly demonstrated.
- That investments, where possible, are being made in Board, staff and volunteer development to better deliver the commitments, goals and objectives of Llais.

By incorporating these elements, the Llais Board Assurance Framework enables the Board to be aware and effectively oversee the organisation's functioning, ensure accountability, and maintain confidence that Llais is fulfilling its mission to strengthen the voice of the people of Wales in health and social care.

Llais organisational purpose and objectives

Llais is the independent Citizen Voice Body for Health and Social Care in Wales, which was established by Welsh Ministers to ensure that the people of Wales have a strong voice in their health and social care services.

The organisation became fully operational on the 1 April 2023 and replaced the former Board and Community Health Councils in Wales, under the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020.

Llais's primary mission is to capture the views and experiences of people and communities living in Wales and represent these views to help shape and improve health and social care services in Wales.

The organisation works closely with local NHS and social services/care providers to ensure that the concerns and needs of the communities are addressed effectively.

Llais also plays an important role in making sure that health and social care services involve people and communities from the beginning when planning, developing, and designing services.

Our board and its committees

Our board comprises a Chair, Deputy Chair and 6 non-executive members and a non-voting associate non-executive member representing the staff of Llais. The Chief Executive is also a full member of the Board and is the designated Accounting Officer for Llais. The Board sets our strategy, and provides scrutiny, oversight and governance across all the work of Llais.

The Board holds the executive team to account in delivering our aims, objectives and priorities to meet the requirements set out in the Health

and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020 and our wider public sector duties.

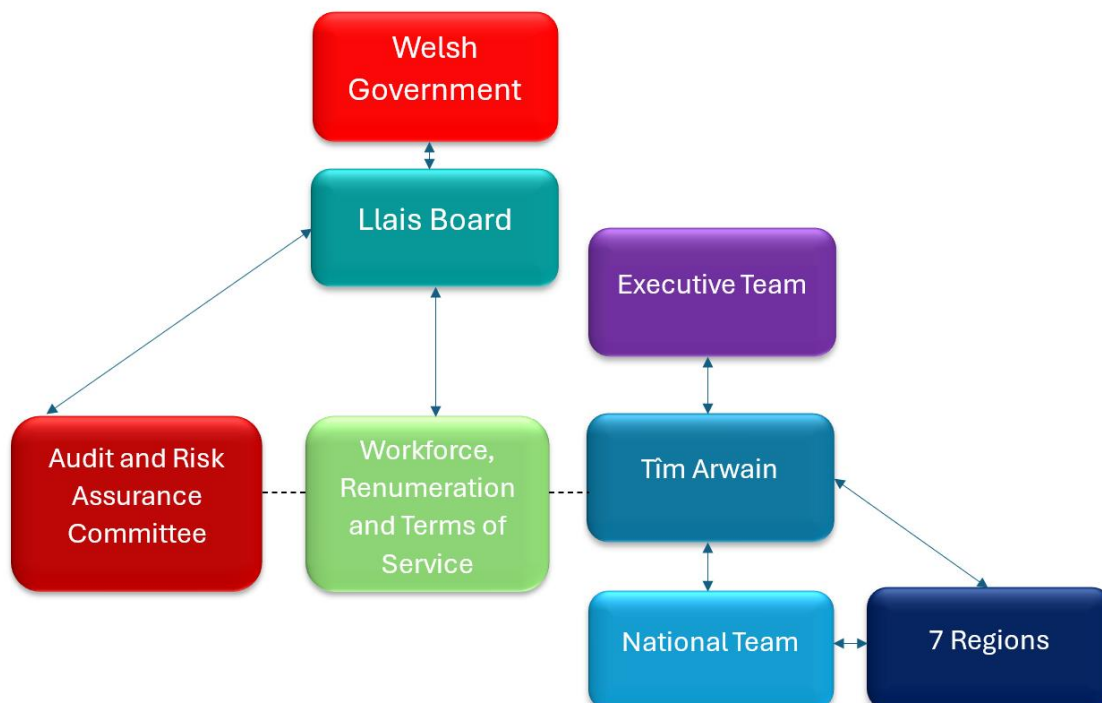
These are delivered through the operational activities of Llais discharged via our corporate functions and 7 regional teams that cover the whole of Wales.

The Board has established 2 committees. These are the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee. These committees provide detailed scrutiny, insight, information, and advice to the Board.

The committees are made up of non-executive members of the Board. The committees are supported and advised by officers and other internal and external advisers. The Board has also appointed to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee 2 additional independent members to provide further input from the perspectives of particularly finance, cyber and IT.

Our governance structure is outlined below:

Llais Governance Structure

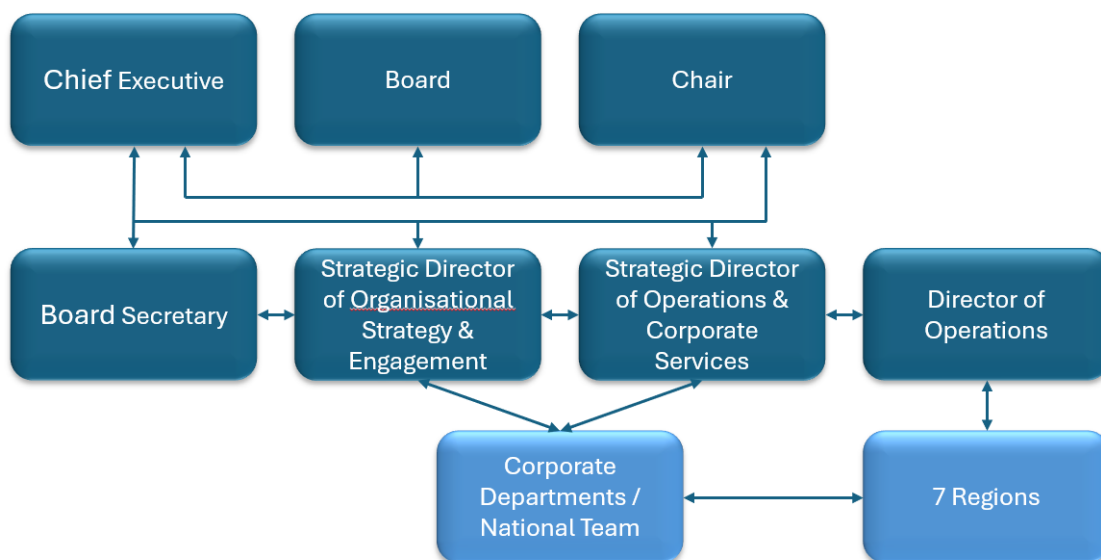


The Board is clear that it wants to be an organisation where inclusivity, integrity, compassion and mutual respect drives all that is done by the organisation.

Our focus is on building relationships with a wide range of people, community representative groups and organisations so that we can work together to use our collective resources to make a difference.

It is vitally important to us that we maintain our independence to most effectively reflect the views and represent the interests of the people and communities of Wales.

The work of Llais is discharged by an executive team, a senior leadership team (Tîm Arwain) and the staff of the organisation through our management structure. An overview of the management structure is provided below:



Sources of assurance

The Board uses the three lines of defence risk and assurance model to frame its governance and assurance approaches and framework.

The **3 Lines of Defence** risk governance framework splits responsibility for risk and assurance into: those that own and manage risks (management; the 'first line') - those that guide risk management (risk, compliance, financial controls, IT and digital compliance; the 'second line') - those functions that provide 'independent' assurance over risks (internal audit; the 'third line').

There is technically a fourth line of those that provide external independent assurance, which includes external audit, inspectors and regulators and the partnership team at Welsh Government (but these are assumed within the third line).

The board and executive team sit across these **3 lines**, defining the corporate risk agenda and setting the risk management strategy and the governance requirements and arrangements.

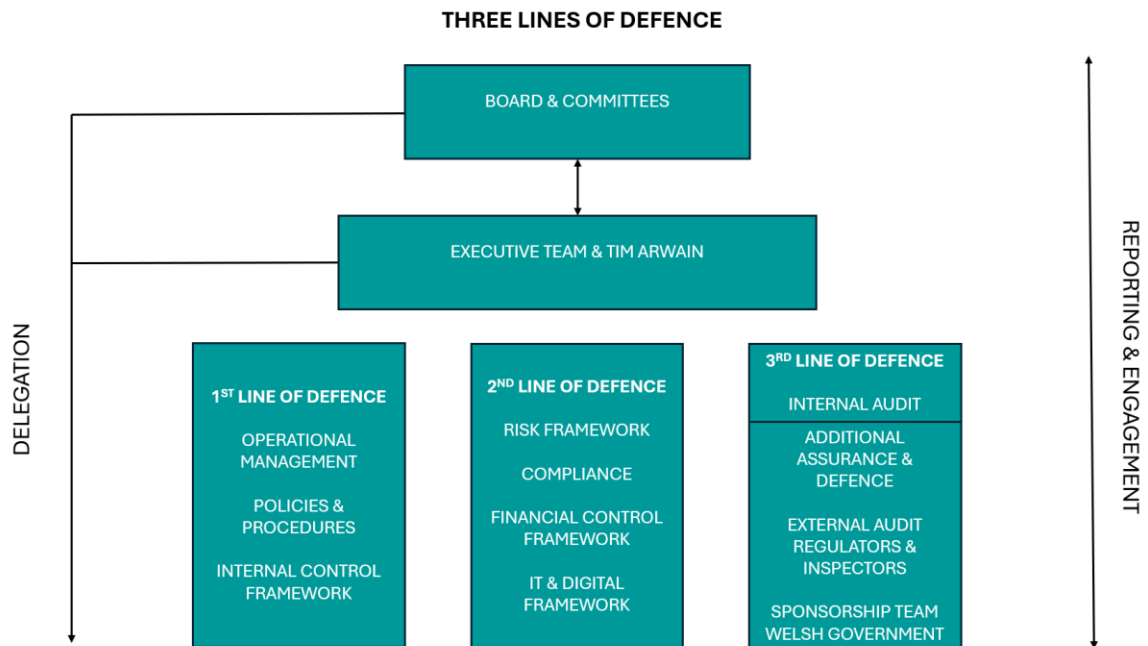
This organisational approach uses reports and information across and within this framework. The Llais Board seeks to receive and give assurance about progress and compliance and whether or not the organisation is on track to meet its agreed objectives and fulfilling its remit by sharing information internally and externally.

There is also a clear recognition of the separation between governance and management roles and responsibilities. This understanding enables active and ongoing dialogue about Llais's current performance and future direction.

To further support this work, the Board, its committees and management will undertake at least annually an assessment of effectiveness of the organisation and its key components. These are used to guide improvement planning and are also features of the year-end annual report and accounts and the governance statement of Llais.

The board through its in-public meetings and reports, regular impact reports and its annual report will give assurance to Welsh Government and the people of Wales about the progress against its Strategy and Annual Plans and the general activities of Llais to fulfil its remit.

This framework will allow the organisation to identify key opportunities and risks, how it is maximising its performance and how it is continuing to learn and develop.



Llais's vision and mission

Our vision: Llais believes in a healthier Wales. A health and social care system where people get the services they need, in ways that works best for them and is ready for whatever the future holds.

Our mission: Llais makes it our mission to listen carefully, locally, regionally and nationally, and to increase the impact of people's voices in shaping services.

We seek to work together with the people of Wales to give them a stronger voice, and represent their interests, when it comes to health and social care.

We do this by:



These are our core activities, and we base our key performance indicators on these 4 areas as well as how we are doing in meeting our strategic objectives and stated priorities.

The vision, mission and key activities have been expressed in a 3-year strategy for Llais – entitled **A National Conversation: Llais Strategic Plan 2024-2027**

This is Llais's first national strategic plan. It has been created using what we have been told by the people of Wales, by our staff and our volunteers, and the other bodies and groups we work with.

The Strategy also reflects our key responsibilities in responding to the Quality and Engagement Act 2020, Equality Act 2010, The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, The Welsh Language Standards 2016, The Socio-Economic Duty, the Public Sector Equality Duty, and national plans and commitments such as the LGBTQ+ and the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, as well as our Remit Letter from Welsh Government.

The Strategy aims to be more than a guide for 3 years – Llais has promised the people of Wales that we will challenge those in charge of the health and social care system to invest in change and to create a strong, fair, and innovative health and social care system.

Therefore, it is essential that Llais is true to its word and that the Board is enabled to demonstrate that it is clearly on track to meet its undertakings, be honest and open about where it is currently not meeting its ambitions and priorities and explaining what it is doing to

make its Strategy a reality. This framework seeks to help the Board know that it is on track, receive information about its achievements and celebrate them. Also, the Board needs to be clear where and why objectives and priorities are behind schedule and what is being done to rectify the position.

By seeking to assure the Board through this framework, Llais as an organisation will also be able to clearly explain to our partners and the people of Wales all that is being achieved and what is planned to be done to meet our responsibilities, aims and objectives.

Each year the Strategy will be operationalised into an **Annual Plan**. Our annual plan sets out what we will do in the relevant financial year to help Llais achieve the priorities we have set out in our 3-year Strategic Plan 2024-2027 'A National Conversation'. Our annual plan is our guide for the year and the mechanism through which we drive and demonstrate progress to meeting our aims and objectives.

Performance against our Annual Plan and reporting performance and risk of non-delivery

Performance against objectives in our annual plans and their achievement will be overseen by the Board. Implementation of the plan will be the responsibility of the Executive Team and Tîm Arwain. Detailed scrutiny will be provided by the committees of the Board.

Executive Team and Tîm Arwain will:

- ❖ Assist the Board in fulfilment of these objectives by providing relevant information through performance reporting and agreed key performance indicators. This will include performance against plans, financial statements and financial plans, investment plans, achievements and successes and any ongoing risks.
- ❖ Provide clarity on the systems and processes that will be used to provide such reports, such as accounting systems and the risk management framework. In its ambition to be innovative and develop integrated systems, Llais has adopted the **OKR system** to facilitate integrated performance management and this system will also provide a platform for organisational and public reporting.

- ❖ Inform the Board of proposed changes required to support achievement of objectives, and any adjustments required due to changes in the prevailing financial and non-financial environment within which Llais is working and seeking to deliver.

All information provided by the Executive Team for the Board and committees will be checked to ensure that it complies with the requirement of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This will be monitored by the Chief Executive and the designated Data Protection Officer, who is the Strategic Director for Operations and Corporate Services.

The OKR system and reporting

Llais will use our **OKR system/platform** (focusing on outcomes and key results) to manage reporting against the achievement of our objectives, our performance management and risk management arrangements. This will be undertaken through a series of reports and integrated dashboards.

However, operationally the existing network of traditional risk registers will also be further developed, maintained and used to assist planning, compliance reporting and to help manage agenda and identify priority area of work. The existing **Risk Management Strategy** will be used to guide this work and report to the Board and its committees.

The OKR system will provide integrated reporting, performance management reports, risk management risk registers and reports, including integrated dashboards. The OKR system offers enhanced reporting through these dashboards and integrated reports. This system is fed from inputs of staff and volunteers across the organisation, from reports from partners and auditors and inspectors and will be fed by two further IT systems, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and SharePoint – which have been designed to improve our record keeping and online spaces to help us work better and have a bigger impact as part of our Digital, Data and IT Strategy.

The OKR will be actively used to facilitate the framing and reporting for the **Board Assurance Framework** in that it will be used in the first instance to generate risk and performance reports and integrated dashboard against the key objectives for Llais.

Each year the Board will agree its objectives for the coming year, a comprehensive mid-year review (September Board) will be provided to the Board via the OKR system and at year end (March Board), which will inform the Board's thinking about the coming year's priorities and objectives (first in-public Board meeting of a new financial year).

The Board will also be engaged in a review discussion at the mid-year and end of year to evaluate progress and agree any required changes (mid-year), this will also commence the pre-planning for the coming year. The end of year review discussions will be to reflect on progress and development the annual plan for the coming year in readiness for formal approval.

Assurance and exception reporting:

Assurance on the adequacy and successful implementation of these arrangements and approaches will be gained from a wide range of sources, but mainly through the OKR.

Reporting and assurance must be systematic, supported by evidence, and where possible independently verified. It plays an important part in robust governance arrangements and processes within Llais, across our partnerships. It will clearly feature in the assurance we give to others about the robustness of our arrangements and performance.

Therefore, the Llais Board will consider a full report against the Board Assurance Framework in twice a year. The Board will receive update reports at each of its in-public Board meetings on the implementation of the Llais Annual Plan and its general performance.

Aligned to this will be an update report on the identified principal risks for the overall Board Risk Framework via a risk dashboard. This will take the form of a report to the Board against the identified top 10 risks from the corporate risk register.

This will enable the Board to make a judgement on progress of the Annual Plan, general performance, the functioning of the organisation and the risk of non-delivery of its objectives. Reports will be made by exception, but where progress is not to plan, clear action plans will be outlined to indicate what will happen to take remedial action to achieve the planned objectives within agreed timelines.

The full Board Assurance Framework will be refreshed each year in line with the agreement of a new annual plan and approved at a meeting of the Board.

The Board Assurance Framework will be tested and scrutinised by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, discussing it twice a year prior to consideration by the Board.

The audit and risk assurance committee will also receive the full corporate risk register twice a year and at its remaining 2 meetings receiving a top 10 risks report from the Corporate Risk Register and the integrated risk dashboard. The Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service committee will continue to engage with and monitor a basket of risks relating to its specific areas of responsibility and will receive an integrated workforce dashboard.

The Executive Team will oversee the risk and assurance system on a day to day basis on behalf of the Board. Tim Arwain will continue to act as the operational group for risk management finalising reports to go to Board and Committees, as outlined above, via the Corporate Risk Register, the network of risk registers across the organisation and the integrated OKR performance system.

The Executive Team will also undertake a monthly review of the Corporate Risk Register and invite to meetings representatives from regions and functions to aid additional scrutiny and agree further action and corporate support.

The Executive Team will hold a quarterly meeting dedicated to priorities and objectives of the Annual Plan. This will also assist with the reporting arrangements, as outlined above.

Annually the outputs and outcomes reported through this system of governance and assurance will be the foundations and key features of the **Llais Annual Report and Accounts**.

Llais, as a Welsh Government Sponsored Body, has a statutory obligation to publish an annual report and audited accounts. This responsibility ensures transparency and accountability in our operations. The annual report and accounts is prepared in accordance with the Welsh Government Accounts Direction and the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FreM)

The report typically includes:

- ❖ **Performance Overview:** Summarizes key activities and achievements.
- ❖ **Accountability Report:** Covers corporate governance, directors' report, and remuneration report.
- ❖ **Financial Statements:** Includes comprehensive net expenditure, financial position, cash flows, and changes in taxpayer's equity.

Meeting these requirements is crucial for maintaining public trust and demonstrating effective use of public funds and is a key annual feature of the Board assurance and reporting framework.

Key to the success of this overall framework will be active engagement of the Board and its Committees and the oversight of the Executive Team and Tîm Arwain to ensure that the Board can positively answer a range of key assurance questions regarding the effectiveness of Llais and its planning and delivery. Examples are outlined below.

- ❖ Are we providing high quality and inclusive services?
- ❖ Are we meeting required standards?
- ❖ Are we contributing to improving the experiences of patients and service users?
- ❖ Are we providing efficient and effective services within available resources?
- ❖ Are we engaging and listening to our workforce?
- ❖ Are we providing equitable and accessible services?
- ❖ Are we improving/helping to improve health and social care services in Wales?

As indicated, this Board Assurance Framework will be formally reviewed and renewed on an annual basis with the intention of its approval at the first in-public Board meeting of each new financial year.