

Item: 13

Title: Corporate Risk Report

Gweithredu/Action required	For comment and assurance
Amseru/Timing	Routine reporting
Argymhelliad/Recommendation	<p>The Board is asked to receive this corporate risk update report for assurance and information.</p> <p>The report is a narrative report on this occasion as the organisation transitions to the new Risk Management Strategy and arrangements, risk registers are reframed in line with the priorities of the new Annual Plan, the recently approved Board Assurance Framework is implemented and the development work on organisational reporting dashboards is finalised.</p>
Risg/Risk	Failing to capture and manage our strategic risks could lead to short and longer-term consequences for Llais.
Cyllid/Finance	There are no direct financial implications for this report other than those risks that directly cover financial matters or have investment elements associated with them.
Amcan cynllun blynyddol/Annual plan objective Amcan cynllun strategol/ Strategic plan objective	<p>Our corporate risk register processes provide assurance to the Board, committees and Tîm Arwain that all strategic risks have been identified and effectively managed.</p> <p>This work forms part of our governance and assurance arrangements in line with the Board Assurance Framework.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has a key role on behalf of the Board in scrutinising the organisational approach to risk and advising on the continuing development of the organisational approach to risk management.</p>

Cydraddoldeb/Equity. Diversity and Inclusion	There are no direct equity, diversity and inclusion matters relating to this report, but there could be features in each risk.
Cyfathrebu/Communications	Please tick one of the following boxes if this activity will have an impact on: Internal: our people <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External: our customers/partners/stakeholders <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External: our organisation's reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cymeradwyaeth/Approval/Clearance	This paper has been cleared by the Chief Executive.
Trafodaethau neu penderfyniadau blaenorol/Previous discussions or decisions	The report provides an overview of ongoing development discussions and work in response to the newly approved risk management strategy, annual plan, board assurance framework and the dashboard development activity. It also outlines the initial risk assessment work undertaken through the Executive Team to identify the key risks of non-delivery of the approved Annual Plan.
Awdur Cyflwyno/Author/presenting	Richard Bevan, Interim Board Secretary
Dyddiad/Date	12 May 2025
Cefndir/Background	
<p>The Board and its committees, particularly the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee have been engaged in development work on risk management over the last year. The Board and its committees have provided comments and suggestions on how the risk approach, risk registers and risk dashboards could be further developed, improved and reported.</p> <p>Changes have continued to be implemented and discussed over recent months, and the Board approved a new Risk Management Strategy at the Board meeting at the end of March 2025.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee also agreed further refinements to the format of the corporate risk register and risk register templates at its meeting in March.</p> <p>The Board in March also approved an Annual Plan for 2025/2026 and a new Board Assurance Framework, which will provide for the Board a mechanism through which</p>	

reporting to the Board will take place on the risk of non-delivery of the priorities of the Annual Plan and other key requirements placed on the Board and organisation.

Work has continued over recent weeks on the required development activities, especially regarding assessment of key risks, sources of assurance, timelines/deadlines for actions, expected outcomes and the finalisation of a corporate risk dashboard, which is being built alongside the developing OKR system, which is computer software through which Llais tracks the achievement of our goals and priorities.

Therefore, the format of this report will be a narrative style report on this occasion. Reporting to the Board for the future will focus more on dashboard reporting and the first full report against these new arrangements will be made at the July 2025 Board meeting at the end of the first quarter of the Annual Plan.

The Chief Executive, Interim Board Secretary and wider Executive Team have undertaken a review of the corporate risk arrangements and an assessment of key risks for the organisation for the next year. The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement has framed the key risks against the non-delivery of the Annual Plan and key projects such as the Rights, Expectations and Responsibilities Project. Work is also being finalised on building these into new risk registers, which will inform the reporting dashboards that will come to the Board and its committees.

Work is also underway following feedback from the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to revise the reporting templates and overview reports that come to the Board and committees. This will be re-designed to ensure that they provide overview information about what has changed in the last reporting period (improved and worsened), what are the new risks, what new mitigations/actions have been put in place and what are the plans for the coming quarter to seek to further act on risks and mitigate their potential impact on the organisation, its services and functions.

The reports will seek to explain what the position will look like if mitigations are successful and what additional resources or support might be required to ensure risks can be brought to an acceptable level in line with the organisation's stated risk appetite.

As a result, the corporate risks register, and the network of risk registers across the departments and functions of Llais are being redeveloped. The key risks identified and assessed against the Annual Plan and other key projects are outlined below in narrative form and will be the basis of risk reporting for the coming year to both the Board and its committees.

Annual Plan 2025/2026 risk assessment

1 Cross-cutting themes – narrative view

Several risks have been identified as stretching across every objective in the Annual Plan; they are seen as the “golden threads” that the Board will need to be sighted on throughout the year.

Capacity and capability

Our workforce is leaner than it was 12 months ago, following the Voluntary Early Release Scheme. The opportunity to redevelop roles and frame new ones is welcomed, but in the short term, the Board must be aware that it does leave some notable gaps.

However, new posts have been designed, and others redesigned and are being recruited to, with some new starters expected from mid-June onwards. Until they arrive, the existing teams are working at maximum capacity. Our immediate response has been to ring-fence staff time for priority tasks and back-fill with short term agency contracts when essential, as well as slowing or pausing lower-impact activity, where possible and/or appropriate.

The Executive Team is also aware that there will be a Senedd election in the spring of 2026 and that we will be entering a pre-election period. It is recognised that the pre-election period can impact on the scope and pace of policy development.

Sustained pressure on health and social care

Service pressures due to waiting times, workforce availability, financial constraints and year-round “winter” pressures means that services have potentially less space and time to engage with Llais or act on our proposals. The risk is that we might stop being heard and that partners might struggle to implement what they have agreed, which could erode public confidence. Mitigation will be two-fold: focus our representations on realistic first steps (for example, better discharge information rather than wholesale pathway redesign) and use our Rights, Expectations and Responsibilities programme to frame actions and activities that remain achievable, even in a pressured system.

Public and partner awareness

Llais is still new to many people. If stakeholders do not understand our distinct role, duplication and blurred accountability could potentially result. A four-message communications plan is in place (“independent voice”, “evidence-led”, “we make change happen”, “we are local and national”). The performance dashboards will give

us more visible, authoritative data, and all public-facing products will be issued in accessible formats, including Welsh-language first.

This is particularly relevant to our role when proposals are made to change services. We have been undertaking work to produce updated information for staff, partners and the public about our role, guidance for staff and the development of an outline protocol for handling service changes for discussion and agreement with NHS bodies and local authorities.

We are also undertaking further public relations work to help with people's awareness, knowledge and understanding of our functions, roles and responsibilities.

Data quality and insight

Our success will depend on good data. Inconsistencies in our Customer Relationship Management system usage, combined with staff turnover, could impact on the dashboards and key performance indicators designed to give assurance. A data-quality dashboard will highlight gaps for each regional lead, monthly "data huddles" will be used to cleanse historic entries, and any issues that threaten decision-making on key matters will be escalated directly to the Executive Team.

Taken together, these cross-cutting risks are currently being actively managed, but must remain on the Board's radar and will be key features of risk reporting.

Capacity within Llais is the largest internal factor, and system pressures the largest external variable to seek to manage in the coming year.

System complexity and accountability gaps

The landscape we operate in, particularly health and social care integration, is increasingly complex. Multiple organisations may be responsible for a single person's experience, and boundaries between health boards, local authorities, the voluntary sector and regulators are not always clear to the public. This creates a risk that our findings or recommendations are passed between bodies without resolution. It also challenges our ability to demonstrate impact.

To mitigate this, we're working through Regional Partnership Boards and using thematic escalation routes to Welsh Government when local action is slower to progress. Our forthcoming representation standards will also clarify expectations around follow-up and response.

Safeguarding and emotional impact of our work

As we engage more directly with people on sensitive issues, for instance, maternity loss, mental health crises, transition of care, and neurodivergent accessibility to name a few, we are more likely to hear distressing or serious disclosures. That creates 2

risks: first, that we are not equipped to act safely or consistently when safeguarding concerns arise; and second, that our staff and volunteers absorb the impact without adequate support.

In response, we have updated our safeguarding procedures, are embedding reflective practice into team routines, revisiting our supervision model for frontline roles and continuing to ensure that staff members have access to the support they might need.

Language and inclusion obligations

The Executive Team is clear that meeting our duties under the Welsh Language Standards is more than compliance; it's about credibility, reach, and equity. However, not all our teams currently have Welsh-speaking staff, and simultaneous translation and bilingual communications create real delivery pressures when timelines are tight. We are taking a "Welsh first" design approach to new campaigns and dashboards, and our internal Welsh Language Working Group is helping us build confidence and consistency. This applies equally to other inclusive formats, including Easy Read and BSL interpretation, where there is still room for us to grow.

Reputational exposure as a 'connector' organisation

Llais occupies a unique space: we are not a regulator, nor a campaigning body, but we are expected to speak credibly on behalf of the people and communities of Wales. That puts us at reputational risk from both directions. If we're seen as too aligned with the system, our independence is questioned. If we're seen as too critical, we may lose access to opportunities and partnerships where change happens. This balance must be actively held and managed. Our mitigations include careful framing in reports, separating individual voice from Llais collective voice, and being solutions-focused on all external products and approaches.

Sustainability of strategic partnerships

Our model of working depends on collaboration with health boards, local authorities, third sector organisations, and national bodies like the Bevan Commission, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, and the Welsh Language Commissioner. These partnerships are generally strong, but many are informal or driven through personal connections. Staff turnover in partner organisations (particularly at senior levels) risks the loss of key working relationships and institutional memory. This can slow progress or force reintroduction of our purpose. Mitigation includes formalising relationships through shared protocols, staying visible in strategic groups, and ensuring new stakeholders are quickly briefed on our role and impact.

Policy instability and shifting priorities

As policy agenda evolve and shift, there's a risk that priorities we've built our plans

around (e.g., complaints reform, digital inclusion, patient voice charters) are changed or reshaped mid-year. This will affect both the impact and the relevance of our outputs. To mitigate the potential for this change, we maintain flexibility in our project scopes, ensure clear alignment with multiple Programme for Government aims, and build our annual plan in ways that can be flexible to respond to policy transitions and changes.

Volunteer and lived experience engagement risk

The credibility of Llais depends not just on what we know, but how we know it, and from whom. Volunteers and people with lived experience bring vital insight but require support, feedback, and meaningful influence to stay engaged.

There's a reputational and ethical risk in consulting without acting, or in creating relationships where people feel their contributions are undervalued or tokenistic. Our response is to build feedback loops into every engagement, strengthen our volunteer learning offer, and embed co-production where possible, rather than using consultation as an afterthought. We will be focusing on our ability to do this well.

Digital and cyber risk

As Llais expands our use of technology, the cyber risk increases. A breach, even of non-personal data, could damage trust. While we do not process clinical data, we do handle large volumes of sensitive narrative material from members of the public. We are mitigating this risk through adherence to legislative requirements, national guidance, development and delivery of compulsory training, completing Cyber Essentials certification, and tightening access controls for dashboard and engagement tools.

2. Risk highlights by strategic priority

Priority 1: Drive a national conversation about the future of health and social care

This priority brings together our most visible, national-facing work, anchored by the *Rights | Expectations | Responsibilities* (R | E | R) campaign. This multi-phase programme includes public engagement, stakeholder roundtables, and the publication of a shared framework for what people can expect from health and social care services in Wales. It is joined by projects such as our review of Integrated Care Hubs, a national "Voices for Change" event, and joint work with the Bevan Commission – Walking in your shoes.

Risks in this area include:

- **Message confusion**, with public-facing campaigns by Llais running in parallel with Welsh Government's "My Voice, My Choice", leading to potential overlap and dilution of impact.
- **Engagement fatigue**, especially among people and groups who have already contributed to multiple national consultations in recent years.
- **Political timing**, as any significant outputs requiring Ministerial response or influence will need to be developed before the pre-election period begins in early 2026.
- **Data saturation**, where we collect powerful insights, but risk losing clarity in what we're asking decision-makers to do with it.

We're mitigating these risks by closely coordinating with national partners, simplifying our campaign messaging, using multiple accessible formats (including low-tech options like phone and Easy Read Surveys), and focusing on practical, people-led recommendations that stay relevant regardless of political change.

Priority 2: Push for services that meet people's needs

This is the 'engine room' of our statutory work covering complaints advocacy, representations, and local engagement that drives systemic feedback. It includes our ongoing thematic reviews, a new Regional Health and Social Care Summits programme, and the scaling of *Maternity and Neonatal Voices Cymru* into a stronger national platform.

Risks in this area include:

- **Delivery pace constraints** due to limited analytical capacity, especially as thematic reviews become more detailed and there is an increased requirement for analysis of data.
- **Inconsistent partner engagement**, particularly from social care bodies, where existing relationships are newer and less embedded.
- **Safeguarding and confidentiality**, especially when dealing with highly sensitive narratives such as maternity loss or serious care failures.
- **Summit fatigue**, with some Health Boards or Regional Partnership Boards potentially reluctant to commit to another layer of meetings.

- **Over-reliance on individuals**, we aren't a big organisation, the potential absence of individuals is strongly felt and impacts on the work programme.

We're responding by securing additional capacity where needed, partnering with trusted third-sector organisations, and co-designing our summits to ensure they feel relevant and useful to partners. We're also phasing our delivery, prioritising timely, actionable, and politically salient topics.

Priority 3: Work together better

This area focuses on how we build sustained partnerships with communities and strengthen the voices of those less heard. Key projects include our *Children and Young People's Programme*, *Community Mapping*, and our *Volunteer Programme*.

Risks in this area include:

- **Safeguarding complexities** in youth engagement and not having the right skills and experience.
- **Volunteer recruitment**, lack of people volunteering means we may not have a volunteer group that reflects our local populations.
- **Uneven engagement**, with urban, well-networked groups more likely to access support than isolated or marginalised communities.
- **Time pressure** - limits opportunities for collaboration.
- **Inadvertent tokenism**, if co-production efforts are not sustained beyond the initial engagement phase, we risk appearing to be making only symbolic efforts to do things.

We're addressing these risks by strengthening safeguarding protocols, proactively offering more flexible volunteer roles (e.g. micro-volunteering), allocating more proactive support for rural or underrepresented groups, and investing in genuine co-production from the outset, particularly for groups, such as children and young people.

Priority 4: Help people and services use technology in ways that work for them

This area reflects the increasing role of digital transformation in both our work and the systems we influence. It includes the development of public and internal dashboards, our participation in the Digital Inclusion Alliance, and upcoming artificial intelligence (AI) work.

Risks in this area include:

- **Digital exclusion**, with some individuals and communities still facing significant barriers to participating in online engagement or accessing digital services.
- **Data protection**, potential threats to confidentiality, integrity and availability of data and unauthorised release, exposure and/or destruction of data.
- **Over-promising**, especially around the use of AI, where expectations may run ahead of what is practical or safe.
- **Tool overloaded**, with staff facing too many reporting systems and not enough support to use them confidently.

Our mitigation strategy includes always pairing digital tools with non-digital alternatives (e.g. postal feedback, phone lines), embedding role-based access controls for sensitive data, providing plain-English guidance for any AI-facing activity, and sequencing dashboard rollouts with clear, bite-sized training.

Priority 5: Grow and improve as an organisation

This priority underpins the whole plan. It includes the continued development of our internal performance dashboard programme, the implementation of a Location Strategy, the delivery of our culture and capability plans (“One-Llais”), enhancing openness and transparency of our governance and the integration of equity, diversity and Welsh language principles into our daily work.

Risks in this area include:

- **Timeline slippage**, competing demands, staff absences, lack of time for staff to engage with developments.
- **Organisational fatigue**, as staff adapt to new systems, new team members, and wider changes.
- **Gaps**, particularly where recruitment or learning and development capacity has not yet caught up with our needs and ambitions.
- **Balancing development and delivery**, we have a large development need across skills, process, system, and policies, but also an expectation to continue delivering impact. We also need to ensure that good governance arrangements are seen as an enabler to help our people do the right things in the rights ways.

We are responding through pragmatic sequencing of internal change, targeted backfill where gaps are acute, investing in our onboarding process for new starters, and transparency with the Board about areas where we need additional investment or time.

For all areas of risk, it is also clear that these risks are being assessed in dynamic internal and particularly external environments, where new factors and decisions made by others will impact on the level of risks for Llais.

Therefore, the identified initial actions and mitigations by Llais might only maintain the risk at initial levels and not reduce it as anticipated. It is therefore important that risk management remains an active process for the organisation, the risk owners and at operational and management meetings.

Risk will continue to be an important feature of the Board and its committees' governance and assurance arrangements. The Executive Team will co-ordinate the organisational work on risk management and will in the coming weeks build a new network of risk registers, seek to embed active risk management in the day-to-day functions of Llais and develop enhanced reporting to the Board, its committees and through the organisation's operational structures, increasingly utilising the dashboard approach.

As agreed, with approval of the new Risk Management Strategy an organisational risk workshop is being planned for later in the year to engage with the Board and colleagues across the organisation and with partners to discuss risk management and to test these new arrangements and adjust where needed and implement further developments, as required.

Active, good risk management and the reporting of risks are important components of the Board's overall Board Assurance Framework. The first report against this is currently being finalised alongside the developing OKR, and the production of a risk management dashboard and the first full reports will be formally submitted to the Board in July 2025.

Manylion/Detail

The Board is asked to note this narrative risk report providing the assessment of key risks against non-delivery of the agreed Annual Plan. Also to note the planned further developments to the risk management approach in line with the implementing of the risk management strategy, Board Assurance Framework and reporting against the OKR and the new network of dashboard reports.