

**Item: 7**

**Title: Chief Executive's report**

**Introduction**

Since our last public board meeting, I have continued to work with lots of key partners to talk about our role, inform our plans and ways of working, deliver on our commitments, tackle key issues in health and social care and identify how we can work together to strengthen the voice of people in health and social care services. Details of all these activities are available on request.

This report focuses on a few of the developments and activities I have been involved in since the last full public board meeting on 21 May 2025. These key activities and developments have not been covered in more detail in other Board papers.

**Working with our partners**

**Strengthening voices through our strategic partnership with the National Office for Care and Support**

Since 2024, Llais has developed an important partnership with the National Office for Care and Support. The National Office for Care and Support was set up by the Welsh Government in 2024 to help make social care better for everyone. It focuses on improving outcomes, access to care and service-user experience. The office works under the leadership of the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales.

In its first year, the National Office for Care and Support has been focused on laying the groundwork and setting itself up to deliver for the future. It hasn't fundamentally changed people's day-to-day care yet, but its activities set the foundations with the aim of enabling it to do so in the years ahead.

In its first year, it has focused on 3 core areas:

- Supporting the Chief Social Care Officer for Wales
- Development, implementation and ongoing delivery of the National Care and Support Service for Wales
- Implementation and ongoing management of the National Commissioning Framework for Care and Support in Wales.

Its first Annual Report 2024-2025 is available at the following link [National Office for Care and Support: annual report 2024 to 2025](#)

Llais sits on the Advisory Board for the National Office. In the past year, our main focus working with the National Office has been to set the foundation to launch a People's Forum – to help make sure people's

voices are built into the foundations and everyday work of the National Office. To help achieve this, we have recently developed and agreed a co-operation arrangement between the National Office for Care and Support and Llais, with the following principles underpinning our joint working:

**Principle 1:**

We will take account of our respective statutory and non-statutory responsibilities and respect each other's independent status.

**Principle 2:**

Our shared focus is to ensure the voices of the people of Wales are fundamental to design, development, and delivery of people-centred social care services.

**Principle 3:**

We will give due regard to recommendations that emerge from inquiries and reviews to improve services for the people of Wales.

**Principle 4:**

Our decisions will be underpinned by our shared aim to achieve high quality social care services; and to protect and promote the health, safety, and welfare of service users.

**Principle 5:**

We will be open and transparent with each other.

**Principle 6:**

We will make the best use of our resources and intelligence and where appropriate we will share information to maximise impact.

Llais will be partnering with the National Office for Care and Support to host a roundtable on the future of social care in Wales at the Royal Welsh Show on Wednesday, 23 July 2025.

The event will focus on exploring the critical role of prevention in supporting rural communities with care and support. Roundtable participants include the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, Chief Social Care Officer for Wales and a range of representative organisations and groups with a key interest in social care services in rural areas of Wales.

## Strengthening people's voices

### Dental reform in Wales

We published our [position statement on access to dentistry in Wales in November 2024](#). Since then, we have continued to work with policy makers and service providers to inform and influence developments in dentistry in Wales, with the aim of addressing the significant challenges people face in getting to see a dentist where and when they need one.

Our activities have included:

- regularly representing people's voices at the Welsh Government's Dental Reform Strategic Oversight Group, which has been set up to oversee dental reform in Wales. Alongside our position statement, our involvement on this group has informed the recent [public consultation on the reform of NHS general dental services in Wales](#).

- raising awareness and encouraging people to respond directly to the Welsh Government's consultation
- on-going discussions with policy makers, representative bodies, and others about the proposals

In June 2025, we sent our [formal response to the public consultation on the reform of general dental services in Wales](#). Our response makes clear that we welcome the Welsh Government's aim to improve NHS dental services. The proposals focus on addressing what we hear most often from people, that it's too difficult to get an NHS dental appointment.

But it's not just about getting through the door. People have also told us about long-standing problems with inequalities in access, how services are communicated, and how charges are explained. From what we've seen in the consultation, the proposals take some welcome steps forward, especially for people without a regular NHS dentist.

As set out, we think the proposals also lead to a risk of unintended consequences, particularly for people already with an NHS dentist. Expanding access could result in the loss of continuity, relationships, and trust, which help reduce anxiety and keep people engaged with their oral health.

It's clear the proposed changes are aimed at bringing a welcome focus on prevention and access for children and enabling those that need treatment the most to access NHS dentistry.

We think other actions will still be needed to close the gaps across Wales between those who can more easily access care and those who can't. If improvements are applied evenly, and not accompanied by additional, targeted actions where the inequity is greatest, things may get better overall but may still not address unfair differences in access.

Our response continues to call for the Welsh Government to collect and use the right data and information to better understand peoples' needs for dental care across Wales, how those needs are being met, and where there is inequity – so that the overall approach to dentistry enables everyone living in Wales to get the dental care they need.

The challenge now is to improve access without losing what works for some people now. To succeed, the system must be fair, inclusive, and clear, both in how care is offered and explained.

The Welsh Government's consultation ended on 19 June 2025. We will continue to work with policy makers and service providers to help drive improvement in dental services in Wales.

## **Listening to parents: the independent review of Maternity and Neonatal Services in Swansea Bay University Health Board**

On 15 July 2025, the [independent review into maternity and neonatal services](#) at Swansea Bay University Health Board was published. The report takes into account what we shared with the independent review team, having heard from over 500 people about their experiences of maternity services, reflected in our report '[Having a baby in Neath Port Talbot and Swansea](#)', published in May 2025.

The independent review echoes the key themes we heard:

- Inconsistent quality of care and communication
- Lack of involvement in decisions and informed consent
- Poor postnatal support and pain management
- Barriers for minority ethnic families and birth partners
- Unsafe care and avoidable harm
- Understaffing and staff culture issues
- Inadequate complaints handling.

We support the Independent Review's 10 priority recommendations, which include faster support when people need help, more compassionate treatment, stronger leadership, and making sure families are involved in their care.

Looking forward, we will:

- Continue listening to families and amplifying their voices in decision-making
- Host the new Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership Cymru to help shape services
- Monitor how the Health Board implements the review's recommendations
- Work with the NHS and policy makers to ensure lessons are learned nationally, including in making changes to the NHS complaints system
- Participate in the all-Wales assessment of maternity services announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.

### **Introducing baby loss certificates in Wales**

For some bereaved parents, baby loss certificates can be an important part of helping them feel supported through their grief. A certificate can recognise a parent's loss, help acknowledge a parent's pain, and can help parents feel heard.

A scheme that provides certificates – on request – to parents whose baby died before 24 weeks of pregnancy has been available in England since February 2024.

In Wales, although the Welsh Government is committed to operating a similar scheme, and work is underway with colleagues in England to develop arrangements for Wales, progress has been slow.

Although families who experience pregnancy loss at maternity units in Wales are offered memory boxes which include a certificate of birth, we know that, for some bereaved parents, being able to get a formal certificate is very important to them.

We have raised our concerns with the Welsh Government about the time it is taking to introduce the scheme in Wales and will continue to review the situation with policy makers so that this scheme is made available to people living in Wales as soon as possible.

### **Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Services: Judicial review outcome**

On 19 June 2025, the courts dismissed a judicial review of the decision made by the NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee (acting on behalf of the 7 health boards in Wales) to restructure the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service (EMRTS).

The decision involved the proposals to consolidate 2 of the 4 existing air ambulance bases at Welshpool and Caernarfon into a single site in North Wales. The person taking the judicial review (and those supporting her) set out their concerns that the decision disadvantages those who live near the bases which would close under the proposals.

The main argument made in taking the judicial review was that the Joint Commissioning Committee should not have made the decision without also taking into account the costs of a decision made at the same time to develop a commissioning proposal for a bespoke road based critical care service to operate in rural areas to strengthen the overall service for people living in those areas.

The Joint Commissioning Committee argued that this was a separate proposal which was not required to make the decision to restructure the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service acceptable. The Judge accepted the Joint Commissioning Committee's argument, as well as dismissing the arguments that there had been a breach of consultation requirements and the public sector equality duty.

In reaching their judgement, the judge also:

- Made clear that “*Regardless of the label to be attached to it, the process of engagement did, in fact, amount to a consultation.*” In practice, this means that whatever it is called, if a public engagement process resembles a consultation, it will be tested like one in court.
- Addressed the role of Llais, recognising that the Joint Commissioning Committee had demonstrated it had given due regard to Llais' representations (noting the further phase of public engagement taken forward in response to our concerns) and

concluding that “*Llais had made exhaustive representations throughout the process leading up to the making of the decision. There was simply nothing of substance which remained to be said which had not already been said. The force of their advocacy would not have been enhanced by repetition regardless of what further documentation or material they were provided with.*”

We understand that the judgement is subject to a request to appeal. We will talk with the Joint Commissioning Committee about its plans to move forward once the position on a possible appeal is known.

## Reviewing our ways of working and impact

### **Senedd Health and Social Care Committee: Llais General Scrutiny Session**

The Senedd’s Health and Social Care Committee held a general scrutiny session on Llais at its 25 June 2025 meeting.

As well as providing a [written submission](#) to the Committee, myself, our Chair and our 2 Strategic Directors attended the session in person to respond to questions from committee members. The session focused on some key themes:

- Our priorities, including our awareness raising activities
- Issues relating to NHS services in Wales
- People’s views about general practice in Wales
- Our relationship with the NHS, local authorities, and policy makers
- Issues relating to social care services in Wales
- The NHS complaints process ‘Putting things right.’

The session is available to watch here [Senedd.tv - Health and Social Care Committee - 25/06/2025](#)

### **Organising ourselves to deliver – reviewing our Executive arrangements**

As part of our commitment to our organisation’s development, our Executive Team and Tim Arwain reviewed our leadership and decision-making arrangements. This included a review of the roles and responsibilities of our Executive Team and Tîm Arwain, as well as our corporate meeting structures.

The findings highlighted strong engagement but also identified the need for more effective meeting formats, clearer roles, and improved follow-through. In particular, Tim Arwain agreed that in supporting me as Accounting Officer, key decisions should rest with the Executive Team, informed and influenced by more strategic discussions and development activity by Tim Arwain.

In response, we’ve introduced a revised structure with more focused, strategically aligned meetings and clearer use of working groups. These changes aim to strengthen leadership, streamline governance, and



support delivery of our objectives. We are also developing a leadership programme for 2025/26 to embed these improvements and ensure our senior leadership arrangements effectively support delivery of the Board's strategy and plans.

### **Responding to the Equality and Human Rights Commission consultation on its Code of practice for services, public functions, and associations**

Llais responded to the Equality and Human Rights Commission's consultation on changes to the Code of Practice following a Supreme Court ruling that clarified the definition of legal sex under the Equality Act 2010 as biological sex at birth.

While acknowledging the clarity this brings, we raised concerns about the potential exclusion of intersex individuals and the broader implications for trans and non-binary people.

Key points in our response included calls for:

- Clearer guidance on the distinction between biological sex and gender identity to prevent discrimination.
- Inclusive policies and training to support trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse individuals, especially in health and social care settings.
- Specific advice on managing single-sex services and facilities fairly.
- Consideration of impacts on workplace practices, including gender pay reporting and positive action policies.
- Further support from the Equality and Human Rights Commission to help organisations navigate these changes sensitively and lawfully.

We emphasised the importance of maintaining dignity, safety, and fairness in service delivery and employment, and urged the Equality and Human Rights Commission to provide practical examples and inclusive guidance to support compliance.

You can see our response in full here [Llais response to the EHRC code of practice consultation | Llais](#)