

Board meeting

Wednesday 28 July 2025

Venue: Ramada Plaza Hotel, Wrexham
and also on Zoom

Members:

Medwin Hughes
Grace Quantock
Alyson Thomas
Bamidele Adenipekun
Jack Evershed
Karen Lewis
Rajan Madhok
Jason Smith

Chair
Deputy Chair
Chief Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive
Non-Executive

Apologies:

Mwoyo Makuto

Associate Member

In attendance:

Richard Bevan
Ben Eaton

Joanne Bolton

Geoff Ryall-Harvey
Israa Mohammed
Sara Glover
Dr Kim Ozano

Board Secretary
Strategic Director of Organisational
Strategy and Engagement
Strategic Director of Operations and
Corporate Services
Regional Director, North Wales
Aspiring Board Member Programme
Stop, Collaborate and Listen Agency
Stop, Collaborate and Listen Agency

Welcome, introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including those joining the meeting online and observing the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

- 2.0 Jason Smith (Non-Executive Member) explained that due to recent changes that his declaration of interest had been updated. This included work with Practice Solutions.

Spotlight on our activities: Social care

- 3.0 Ben Eaton, Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement gave an overview of the activity that Llais had been undertaking since its establishment given that the organisation's remit covered social care as well as NHS services.
- 3.1 It was explained that Llais had needed to create new relationships and learn new areas of work. This included building new partnerships and ensuring Llais's arrangements were best placed to engage with its wider remit.
- 3.2 Internally, work had been undertaken on structures and lead roles. Claire Taylor the acting Regional Director for Neath, Port Talbot and Swansea had been appointed as strategic lead for social care. Mwoyo Makuto had been appointed as the Head of Complaints Advocacy Profession with a clear focus on social care.
- 3.3 Also, a programme of staff development and learning had been framed and delivered to ensure all staff were kept updated on social care services and developments.
- 3.4 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement outlined some of the key themes that were arising through our engagement with the people of Wales. These issues included:
- concern about care homes and end of life care
 - lack of support for people with mental health concerns, particularly Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and support for people with learning disabilities
 - a lack of continuity of care including the same or named carers providing support, availability of care workers,
 - poor communication
 - lack of respite and long waits for assessments

- the slow pace of integration between health and social care services.
- 3.5 Importantly, engagement activities had also heard positives about social care services. These included dedicated staff, joined-up care in some areas, good local knowledge and support, and improving communication, again in some areas.
- 3.6 Llais had been engaging with partners to represent what was being heard through our engagements. Our organisation's work to forge new partnership activity through our regions had focused on working with local authorities as key partners, as well as other agencies.
- 3.7 Nationally, our all-Wales team had been focusing on working with national level partners such as Social Care Wales, Care Inspectorate Wales and the Association of Directors of Social Services.
- 3.8 Engagement regionally had also taken place with Regional Partnership Boards, but the benefits of this, so far, had been variable. It was suggested that further work would be required on maximising of the impact that Regional Partnership Boards could have between partners in the framing and delivery of integrated health and social care services.
- 3.9 Llais had also become a founding member of the National Social Care Conference (NSCC) Network. The Network was a transformative space that sought to bring the social care community closer together. It offered insights, examples of innovative practice and was a supportive community with the aim of achieving social care excellence.
- 3.10 The Board welcomed the update and the focus on social care and services in local communities. It was suggested that although there were clearly areas to continue to seek to influence partners and providers using the feedback received, there were also examples of improvement and good practice as borne out by the recent Social Care Accolades, which Llais had sponsored.
- 3.11 It was suggested that this work should be further marked and celebrated. Often the projects were small scale projects, which

worked at the local level, but there could be benefit for the wider spread of effective models and the sharing of experiences.

- 3.12 It was agreed that the Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement would look into work with partners to further celebrate success.
- 3.13 Alyson Thomas, Chief Executive gave an example of work being undertaken in Powys regarding the role of day centres and developing community arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would engage with the Regional Director of Powys to obtain an update on progress and share this with the Board.
- 3.14 Board members highlighted a number of issues of concern. These included that high staff turnover was not a new thing and that terms and conditions for many social care staff meant that it was difficult to retain them in the longer term. However, further information was needed on the support and learning for knowledge and skills development and transfer, including access to qualifications, for social care staff, as this could encourage staff to stay.
- 3.15 It was also highlighted that many people considered that services were designed centrally and that too often they worked for institutions rather than meeting the needs of people. It was suggested that further consideration needed to be given to empowering people and working with partners to enable people to feed in their views and ideas.
- 3.16 Also, it was recognised that services for people should be individually tailored to support people's needs, rather than being a single offer to cover the needs of many people. Board members considered it was positive the level of engagement taking place on social care matters, and to better understand them in order to seek make a difference going forward.
- 3.17 The Chief Executive commented that discussions were being held with Social Care Wales, which covered many of these key themes. A Board-to-Board event was being planned for early 2026 and it would be important to have discussions about how our 2 organisations could work together to respond to the issues people were highlighting.

- 3.18 It was agreed that the Chief Executive and Board Secretary would confirm the proposals for the board-to-board session.
- 3.19 The Chair thanked the Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement for the papers and also all staff of Llais who were actively involved in taking this work forward.
- 3.20 The Chair also looked forward to the continuing development of our partnership work and the planned board-to-board session with Social Care Wales in early 2025.

A25-07-01: The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement to look into work with partners to further celebrate success. **Action: Ben Eaton**

A25-07-02: The Chief Executive to engage with the Regional Director of Powys to obtain an update on day centre arrangements in Powys and share this with the Board. **Action: Alyson Thomas**

A25-07-03: The Chief Executive and Board Secretary to confirm the proposals for the board-to-board session with Social Care Wales. **Action: Alyson Thomas and Richard Bevan**

'A review of social care in Wales' research - presentaion

- 4.0 Dr Kim Ozano and Sarah Glover from the Stop, Collaborate and Listen Agency outlined the research that had been conducted on social care in Wales, on behalf of Llais. The overall aim of this activity was to make services more people centred, enable people to better understand social care services and what they provide and to ultimately help people live better and more fulfilled lives.
- 4.1 The research had focused on people's stories. A number of focus group discussions and engagement activities had taken place across Wales.
- 4.2 It was highlighted that many people were not clear what social care and social services are, what they provided and how to access them for themselves and their families.

- 4.3 There was also confusion and uncertainty about payment models and direct payments and how to navigate this system and access the support that was needed and required.
- 4.4 A Board member added that this was complicated by uncertain tax implications, especially regarding direct payments. This was an area that needed to be looked at urgently.
- 4.5 There was also significant concern about the reliance placed on unpaid carers and the negative impact on their health and well-being. It was suggested that without unpaid carers and the support they provided that the care system would be completely unaffordable and would collapse.
- 4.6 The social care system was characterised as one under significant pressure, even though there were still some examples of positive care and support, good communication and co-ordination. However, there was an inconsistency of service provision and service standards; differing depending on where you lived.
- 4.7 There were pockets of innovation and development, but these were not always being effectively shared or taken forward everywhere.
- 4.8 There were reports of skills gaps and inconsistency of learning and development. There were also examples of positive projects leading development and change and leadership teams across Wales seeking to effect positive change in services to improve people's experiences of care.
- 4.9 There was evidence of investment in learning and training and also commitments for fairer pay and working conditions, with evidence of progress in this area. This had been helped by the active engagement of carers and families and third sector providers.
- 4.10 There was also evidence that services were improved, better connected and integrated when local partnerships were clearly working together in the interests of service users through collaborative governance and working groups.
- 4.11 It was highlighted that services and support for children and young people was an area for increased focus. This was needed to make sure that networks were built to support them and raise their

awareness about how to access services and support, especially as many transitioned from younger people's services to adult services.

- 4.12 It was important that younger people were part of these conversations as they had clearly expressed that they wanted to be part of planning and decision making. Discussions needed to take place about how children and young people could be better engaged.
- 4.13 Board members welcomed the overview of the research and the key messages it provided. There was clear alignment with the feedback received directly through Llais's engagement activity. The person centred and strengths-based approaches that the research highlighted were also welcomed to promote positive change and foster innovation in the interests of the people of Wales.
- 4.14 A Board member added that sometimes the health and social care system, especially in rural communities, could be over formalised through structures and processes rather than seeking to empower people and allow them to guide and drive the conversations for services and support that make a difference for them.
- 4.15 Board members particularly highlighted the importance of working with young people and their families to better understand their needs. An important area to think about was the requirement for some young people to receive out of county care, often some distance away from their families and friendship groups. This was seen as a particular issue in North Wales and other border areas with England.
- 4.16 The Board highlighted the helpful and insightful nature of the content of the presentation and was particularly interested in the overview of partnerships, particularly Regional Partnership Boards, and the current arrangements for sharing good practice and learning. Also, the approaches used to gather information, not just quantitative, but qualitative data and how this is used to frame and inform decisions.
- 4.17 The Chief Executive highlighted that many of these themes could be picked up through a range of social care summits planned in each region during the coming year. Also, the joint board-to-board meeting planned with Social Care Wales would be an opportunity to further explore these themes.

- 4.18 The Chair thanked the presenters for a very informative item and emphasised that the feedback would be very helpful in taking forward our important work in the health and social system, ensuring that it was informed by people and designed around their needs.
- 4.19 The Chair concluded by highlighting the need for further research at local and national levels and suggested that further engagement could be taken with Health and Care Research Wales.

Report from the Chair

- 5.0 The Chair provided a verbal report to the Board on his engagements and activities since the last meeting. As part of this report, the Chair confirmed that in June 2025, Llais had presented to a general scrutiny session with the Health and Social Care Committee at the Senedd.
- 5.1 This session had gone well and provided the opportunity to further raise the profile of Llais's role, and the work undertaken so far. All colleagues involved in the preparation and engagement at the committee meeting were thanked by the Board.
- 5.2 It was also highlighted that work would be undertaken in the organisation and with our partners to be clear on our organisational approaches leading into the next Senedd election in 2026. This was so that Llais could best represent the voices and views of the people in Wales by making sure Llais's representations and feedback was clearly understood and could potentially influence manifestos in readiness for the election campaigns.
- 5.3 The Chair also reported that during recent weeks he, along with the Chief Executive had met with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care as well as other meetings with representatives of Welsh Government and other partner bodies.

Report from the Chief Executive

- 6.0 The Board received an update on matters across Llais from the Chief Executive.

- 6.1 The Chief Executive highlighted a range of activity taken forward since the last Board meeting including the scrutiny session with the Health and Social Care Committee, as outlined in the Chair's report. The Chief Executive highlighted work undertaken with the National Office of Care and Support to strengthen people's voices and recent work taken forward in partnership at the Royal Welsh Show.
- 6.2 The Chief Executive highlighted the Llais position statement and consultation response on dental services in Wales, noting that further information was being sought on the timetable for making changes to the dental contract following consultation.
- 6.3 Further work had also progressed to make sure people's voices continue to be heard in the review of maternity and neonatal services in Swansea Bay University Health Board and more widely. Action had also been taken to check on the steps being taken to introduce baby loss certificates in Wales. Further updates would be provided when a timetable was made clear.
- 6.4 The Chief Executive reported that the Emergency Medical Retrieval and Transfer Service judicial review has reported, and the request for the review had been dismissed. It was understood that the outcome could be subject to appeal and further updates would be given as it became clearer.
- 6.5 The Board noted the outcome of the review and that the ruling had clearly stated that the Joint Commissioning Committee had given due regard to the representations from Llais. The judge had also noted that Llais had made extensive representations in the process, concluding that there had been no breach of consultation requirements on the part of the Joint Commissioning Committee.
- 6.5 The Chief Executive explained that the learning for Llais from the process of judicial review would be developed into a briefing note. The legal advice and any implications would inform guidance for Llais staff.
- 6.6 It was explained that internally Llais has recently undertaken a range of effectiveness reviews to make sure that in governance and process terms the operational and management structure of Llais was best placed to deliver. Adjusted arrangements would be put in place for Executive Team and a reframed Tim Arwain.

6.7 The Board noted the Chief Executive's report.

A25-07-04: The Chief Executive to arrange the development of a briefing note on the judicial review process, with legal advice on any implications informing guidance for the staff of Llais. **Action: Alyson Thomas**

Performance against our Annual Plan – Quarter 1 2025/26

- 7.0 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement provided an update on the performance against our annual plan for quarter 1 of 2025/2026.
- 7.1 It was explained that the report aimed to provide the Board with a comprehensive overview of organisational performance for the year to date, including detailed performance data and outcomes from the first quarter of 2025 (Q1).
- 7.2 It presented a more detailed analysis of activities, measurable achievements, and the impact of work with individuals and communities. Work continued to develop a suite of dashboards that would visually summarise and represent key information.
- 7.3 The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement outlined that 4 out of 5 priorities from the Llais Annual Plan were assessed as green and were on target. However, priority area 5 – to grow and improve as an organisation was assessed as amber. A number of initiatives had started later than planned. However, performance remained green overall for the first quarter.
- 7.4 The first quarter's activities were assessed as having been a period of meaningful delivery and visible impact for Llais, with much of Llais's capacity focused on work that was already making a difference across Wales.
- 7.5 However, unplanned demands, staff vacancies, and changes in key roles had required flexibility and responsiveness. As a result, some longer-term development projects had progressed more slowly than intended. Despite this, strong foundations were now in place to accelerate progress in the next quarter.

- 7.6 The Strategic Director also outlined information about levels of representations made and engagements with partner organisations. Ongoing themes were highlighted through this work.
- 7.7 This included access to mental health services, access to cancer care, waiting times for neurodiversity assessments, some lack of integration or understanding between services, examples of poor communication and quality of care, especially on some NHS wards, accessing GP services and access to services for people who were homeless.
- 7.8 The engagement and participation in local forums and Llais local events were outlined. Feedback had shown that people felt valued by being kept informed following participating, with some regions piloting new follow-up processes to “close the loop” and show how feedback had made a difference. This approach helped build trust and encouraged further involvement.
- 7.9 Llais had also attended and participated in a range of national events already in the first quarter. More engagement was planned for the coming period including participation in the National Eisteddfod in Wrexham.
- 7.10 A Board member noted capacity challenges that had been encountered in delivering the planned programme of work. The Chief Executive explained that there had been impact following some staff having left Llais under the Voluntary Early Release Scheme. However, a number of new roles had been designed as a result and were progressing through development and recruitment processes.
- 7.11 The Board welcomed the report, and the progress made. It was suggested that further information could be added to the report regarding the organisation’s assessment of our impact and what it had meant for those we had been supported.
- 7.12 The Strategic Director explained that the programme – ‘The Health and Social Care We Want’– would assist with these reports and the levels of engagement, impact and feedback from this programme would be added into the quarterly reports going forward.

7.12 A Board member also highlighted current NHS consultations especially in rural areas, such as the consultation affecting health services in West Wales. It was suggested that Llais needed to provide feedback on this consultation, including commenting on the effectiveness of engaging with rural communities, in particular which approaches and methodologies may work best in these circumstances.

A25-07-05: The Strategic Director of Organisational Strategy and Engagement to build in further information on impact and 'The health and social care we want' programme into future quarterly reports. **Action: Ben Eaton**

A25-07-06: Further briefing would be provided to the Board on 'The health and social care we want' programme. This would be incorporated in the Board development programme. **Action: Ben Eaton and Richard Bevan**

Finance report to the end of June 2025

- 8.0 The Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services outlined the Llais financial position for the first 3 months of the 2025/2026 financial year. The paper also provided an update on the 2025/2026 budget and forecast.
- 8.1 It was confirmed Llais remained in a stable financial position as of the end of quarter 1 2025/26. The organisation had continued to realise staffing-related savings, which had supported reallocation of resources to priority areas.
- 8.2 While variances had arisen due to changes in phasing, staffing vacancies, and one-off costs, these were being closely monitored and actively managed. The Finance Team would continue to work with budget holders to refine forecasts and ensure budgets remained aligned with operational delivery plans.
- 8.3 A Board member highlighted the issue of national insurance payments and changes in HMRC approaches to contractors and agency employees and whether or not it would affect Llais and its current engagement of agency staff. The Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services would seek clarification.

A25-07-07: The Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services would seek clarification on the national insurance payments for contractors and agency staff. **Action: Joanne Bolton**

Workforce update including dashboard

- 9.1 The Strategic Director of Operations and Corporate Services report updated the Board on the progress on key workforce matters. This included recruitment, learning and development updates, policy development work and organisational development activities.
- 9.2 The workforce dashboard was also provided for information, and particular mention was made of the higher than expected sickness levels across at this time, but it was recognised that instances of longer term sickness had reduced. It was noted that further discussion was planned on this matter at the next Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee.
- 9.3 It was explained that further work was being undertaken on the continued implementation of the agreed behavioural standards and that a range of workforce policies were being reviewed and redeveloped to clearly reflect the values base of Llais and our new behaviour and culture frameworks.
- 9.4 The Chair asked what the exit interviews of staff leaving Llais, especially those leaving through the voluntary early release system had indicated. It was confirmed that further work was being carried out on exit interview approaches, as this was undertaken locally and outputs were not currently collated across the organisation.
- 9.5 A report would be submitted to the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee. A Board Member suggested that consideration of reflective practice in this area might be beneficial.
- 9.6 It was explained that the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee had also received an update on key workforce data at its meeting on 16 July 2025 and that the next meeting was scheduled for October 2025.
- 9.7 Further work on being a trauma informed organisation, new metrics on diversity and new national proposals in workplace harassment

would also be considered at that meeting. A Board Member also asked if a new organisational structure chart could be considered at the committee meeting in readiness for wider circulation to the Board.

A25-07-08: A series of updates to be submitted to the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee in October 2025. **Action:** **Joanne Bolton**

Health and social care services in North Wales

- 10.0 The Regional Director for North Wales gave a presentation on health and social care services in North Wales.
- 10.1 An overview of the work of the region was given, including a profile of the North Wales region and the engagement with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the 6 local authorities that covered the region.
- 10.2 The Regional Director particularly explained the ongoing work being undertaken with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board in response to it's position in special measures, and in particular ongoing work regarding mental health services in the region. The work on mental health was a spotlight theme in the presentation.
- 10.3 An overview was also given of the work the regional team was undertaking routinely, including complaints advocacy services and support. Key areas of engagement were also outlined including failings in colorectal care by 1 English Trust, problems with referrals to another NHS trust, shortcomings in the consent process, failure to provide advice and weaknesses in contract monitoring – prioritising financial reporting over patient safety and service quality.
- 10.4 The Regional Director also outlined the work being undertaken on community engagement and service changes. Significant development work was underway on support for the armed forces and veterans accessing health and social care support.
- 10.5 The Chair thanked the Regional Director for the very informative presentation and thanked all the staff in North Wales for their work on behalf of Llais.

Corporate risk report

- 11.0 The Board Secretary introduced the narrative corporate risk report and confirmed that changes had continued to be implemented and discussed over recent months. This had included the appointment of a new Governance and Risk Manager who would be joining Llais in early August.
- 11.1 Work had continued over recent weeks on development activities, especially regarding assessment of key risks, sources of assurance, timelines/deadlines for actions, expected outcomes and the finalisation of corporate risk dashboards, which were being built alongside the developing OKR system (which was the computer software through which Llais tracked the achievement of its goals and priorities).
- 11.3 The Chair and members of the Board welcomed the narrative format of the risk report. Members agreed that it was clearer and easier to engage with in narrative form and that it provided a clear management assessment of how risk was being assessed and managed within the organisation.
- 11.4 The Board thanked the Board Secretary for the continuing work on developing a new style report which supported the scrutiny and assurance work of the Board.

Minutes of the last meeting: Wednesday 21 May 2025

- 12.0 The Board approved the minutes from the 21 May 2025 meeting. The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record.

Action log and discuss any matters arising from the minutes

- 13.0 The Board Secretary provided an update on the action log, this was discussed and approved by the Board. The Board agreed to move completed actions to the completed actions section.
- 13.1 There were no other matters arising from the minutes, not covered elsewhere in the Board agenda.

Assurance Reports from Board Committees

- 14.0 The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee provided an overview of the Audit, Risk and Assurance meeting held on 25 June 2025 via an assurance report.
- 14.1 Key matters highlighted included that the internal audit programme for the year had been completed with 3 reports being presented, 1 of which provided substantial assurance and 2 others reasonable assurance. The overall Head of Internal Audit Opinion was also presented and provided overall reasonable assurance for Llais. The internal audit programme for 2025/2026 was also endorsed.
- 14.2 The Chair of the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service committee confirmed that a meeting of the committee had been held on the 16 July 2025. The committee had received updates on workforce trends and metrics and also discussed its plan for the coming year. This was to be confirmed at the next meeting.

Board development programme

- 15.0 The Board Secretary presented the proposed Board development programme following the Board effectiveness review undertaken earlier in the year. It was explained that the intention was to include the outputs from the Board effectiveness review into the Board's overall forward work programme and plan.
- 15.1 The Board approved the proposed development programme and agreed that it would be added to the existing forward work programme and timetabled plan.

A25-07-09 – The Board Secretary to submit the new work programme to the Board meeting in September 2025 for approval. **Action: Richard Bevan.**

Questions from the public

- 16.0 The Board Secretary confirmed that 2 questions had been received from members of the public.
- 16.1 The first related to access to ear wax removal in primary care. Enquiries had been made with Welsh Government to confirm the

policy position and to reply to the member of the public about the best way to access services to meet their needs. The position with the final response would be confirmed in the action log for the Board to ensure that it became part of the public record.

- 16.2 The second question related to children and young people's advocacy services and also the problems accessing child and adolescent mental health services. The member of the public was also present at the meeting and provided input and further information to the Board about their concerns. It was agreed that the information sent in response would also be added to the Board action log. Q

A25-07-10: The position with the final responses to the question would be confirmed in the action log for the Board to ensure that it became part of the public record. **Action: Richard Bevan**

Date of the next meeting

- 17.0 The next meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 24 September 2025 at 9:30am, in Newport.

The meeting concluded with the Chair thanking all involved in preparing the papers, presentations and contributing to the Board meeting.