

Item: 04

Title: Chief Executive’s report

Introduction

Since our last public board meeting, I have continued to work with 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 24 September 2025. These key activities and developments have not been covered in more detail in other Board papers.

Strengthening people’s voices
Armed Forces Covenant The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, including the bereaved, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy, and society they serve with their lives. Its 2 principles are that, recognising the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces: - Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved. The Covenant focuses on helping members of the Armed Forces community have the same access to Government services as any other citizen. This includes healthcare, where there is a legal duty on NHS bodies to have due regard to the principles of the covenant. Plans are underway to extend this duty to local authorities in relation to social care.

On 5 November 2025, Llais signed the Armed Forces Covenant at the Armed Forces in Wales - Employer Conference held at the Cardiff City Stadium. This important commitment was signed by our Chair, Medwin Hughes, and me to demonstrate our pledge to support members of the armed forces community. This includes serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

Llais has committed to ensure they are treated fairly and not disadvantaged when accessing our services.

By signing the Covenant, we have reinforced our values of inclusion and equity. We will continue to work to:

- Ensure fair access to our services for the armed forces community.
- Consider their needs in our engagement and consultation activities.
- Explore opportunities to support veterans and reservists in employment.
- Raise awareness among staff about the unique challenges faced by this community.

We have identified a strategic senior lead for our organisation for the Armed Forces Covenant to help us understand and integrate the principles established by the Covenant into our policies and practice as an employer and the wider work of Llais. We will work to make sure that the needs of our armed forces community is considered in all NHS and social care decisions and we will continue to reach out to those in the Armed Forces Community of Wales.

This work will build on the activities we have already carried out in Llais focusing on the health and social care needs of our armed forces community. This has included, for example, engaging with Woody's lodges and hosting a public forum in North Wales focusing on our armed forces community.

Carer Aware

Carer Aware is a Welsh Government-funded programme delivered by Carers Trust Wales and Carers Wales. Its purpose is to empower unpaid carers and improve professional practice across health and social care. The programme promotes awareness of carers' rights under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, supports cultural change, and embeds co-production.

Its achievements include the rollout of the Young Carer ID Card, training for social care professionals, delivery of the Short Breaks Fund, development of resources for carers and professionals, and more recently new activities focused on older carers, linked to GP and community support.

The role played by programmes like this is important. This is because our community engagement activities regularly show that policy makers and services still need to do more if carers are to achieve the recognition and framework of support, they need in Wales.

As part of the Carer Aware Advisory Board, Llais recently met with representatives leading the delivery of Carer Aware to talk about next steps as the funding for the programme is ending this year.

We talked about success of Carer Aware in improving professional practice and supporting carers and the need to think more about how the programme could build on this, including the potential to expand the project beyond health and social care into community settings.

Questions explored included the best approach for community engagement, potential partners outside statutory sectors, the implications of reducing the focus on health and social care, and the continued value of the programme to statutory services.

We supported expansion into community settings as a natural evolution, and offered a range of suggestions on how best to achieve this, including, for example:

- working with trusted local organisations such as libraries, schools, faith groups, and community hubs to reach hidden carers and those digitally excluded
- co-producing culturally sensitive messaging, with accessible materials distributed through non-clinical routes
- engaging partners beyond health and social care, including education providers, employers, housing associations, and digital inclusion groups, to build trust and improve access.

While community engagement offers clear benefits, we cautioned against reducing the statutory sector focus. Maintaining momentum on hospital discharge, care planning, and workforce development is essential.

We will continue to work with the Carer Aware programme to inform and influence developments in this area.

British Sign Language (Wales) Bill

The British Sign Language (Wales) Bill was introduced to the Senedd on 14 July 2025. Scrutiny of the bill is being taken forward in the Senedd by the Equality and Social Justice Committee. The Bill is currently at the first stage of scrutiny, with the committee having taken evidence between July and October 2025. The next stage of scrutiny is expected in spring 2026, with final scrutiny and Royal Assent expected by mid-2026.

The Bill aims to promote and facilitate the use of British Sign Language (BSL) in Wales, ensuring that d/Deaf people and BSL users can access public services equitably. It seeks to improve inclusion, raise awareness, and embed BSL into service planning and delivery.

In October 2025, the Equality and Social Justice Committee invited Llais to contribute to its scrutiny of the Bill by responding to questions about how our own services meet the needs of BSL users, as well as what we hear about how health and social care services meet those needs.

Our response described how Llais was committed to and worked to make sure our own services are delivered on a needs-based, person-led basis, ensuring communication needs are met for all, including BSL users.

We talked about how our key policies supported us to carry out our activities in an inclusive way, focused on meeting people's individual needs, including tailored communication approaches. We also highlighted the further work that is underway as part of our wider organisational development. This includes introducing basic BSL training for our staff and creating opportunities for formal qualifications to further enhance accessibility.

We shared examples of positive feedback we had received about the approach we were taking in carrying out our role, and the difference it makes in how people feel about us if they can communicate with us easily in the way that works best for them. But we also highlighted the challenges we face at Llais in accessing interpreters when needed, and the importance through the changes in the NHS complaints system to increase interpreter availability to meet the new approach and deadlines.

We shared what we've learned from people across Wales about their experiences as British Sign Language (BSL) users within health and social care services. These insights came from our complaints advocacy service and wider engagement activities, and included the following themes:

- **Interpreter shortages:** People often report delays or cancellations because qualified interpreters are unavailable. This is a recurring issue across GP practices, hospitals, and social services.

- **Reliance on technology:** Many services depend on video interpreting platforms, which users describe as unreliable—freezing screens, poor connectivity, and interpreters unfamiliar with Welsh sign variations.
- **Inaccessible systems:** Booking appointments often requires phone calls or complex online forms, which are not BSL-friendly. Some GPs allow email requests, but this is inconsistent and not equitable.
- **Lack of awareness:** People encounter staff who lack d/Deaf awareness, leading to inappropriate reliance on family members for interpretation or assumptions that written English is sufficient.

The overarching message was clear: across health and social care services access to timely, appropriate BSL support remains inconsistent and, in many cases, inadequate. While there are examples of good practice, systemic barriers persist.

Looking forward, we will continue to:

- Advocate for a shared framework for interpreter access across health and social care
- Invest in our own capacity and capability through BSL and d/Deaf awareness training and support
- Work with Welsh Government and wider partners to address interpreter shortages and improve accessibility standards.

Doctors banned from practising abroad working in the NHS

Media reports during October 2025 have raised serious concerns about doctors who were banned or sanctioned overseas but were still able to work in the NHS. An investigation by The Times found that some of these doctors had committed serious misconduct, including sexual offences, harassment, and failures in patient care. These cases came to light because of weaknesses in international information-sharing and a system that relies heavily on doctors declaring their own disciplinary history.

Recognising the concerns that people in Wales would have on hearing about this, we asked to meet with the General Medical Council (GMC) to understand more about what had happened, how it might affect people living in Wales, what it was doing about it and how the public could get in touch directly if they had any worries or concerns about their NHS care.

In response, the GMC told us that anyone who was worried or concerned could contact it directly through its usual ways. This includes message chat, telephone, or email.

For Wales, the GMC assured us that none of the doctors identified in the investigation currently have a prescribed connection to Welsh Health Boards. However, because Welsh patients often receive care in England, it is vital that adequate safeguards are in place across the NHS.

The GMC told us it is:

- urgently reviewing cases and strengthening its registration checks
- pushing for better international information sharing to stop doctors from hiding overseas sanctions
- piloting tougher verification through specialist providers
- pressing global regulators to share information more openly and consistently.

At Llais, we will continue to work with the GMC and other regulators to make sure the actions taken and planned (not only by the GMC but other regulators who may need to learn from the issues identified with doctors) result in stronger safeguards and greater transparency to protect public safety.

Stroke services in Wales

We have recently met with representatives from the NHS Wales Performance and Improvement team to talk about stroke services in Wales. Further information will be provided at the meeting.

Developing our ways of working and impact

The Public Office (Accountability) Bill - "Hillsborough Law"

The UK Government has introduced the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, also known as the "Hillsborough Law," which aims to address institutional failures by placing a legal duty of candour and assistance on public authorities and officials, backed by criminal sanctions.

The Bill will require public authorities and officials to act with candour, transparency, and frankness in inquiries and investigations, and to promote ethical conduct within their organisations. Work is ongoing to have a corresponding Bill laid in the Senedd and the deadline for this is 30 June 2026.

While the public sector in Wales is already expected to operate within a clear ethical framework, this legislation provides an opportunity to reinforce these commitments and further embed a culture of accountability and transparency.

Llais will work with the Welsh Government and wider public sector in Wales to prepare for the introduction of the legislation, and the Board will be kept updated on progress.

Working in partnership: Public sector arm's length bodies

A recent meeting with the Chief Executives of Welsh Government arms-length bodies provided an opportunity to revisit a shared ambition for more effective collaboration across public bodies, building on discussions held earlier in the year.

At the meeting, Chief Executives agreed a series of actions to help drive things forward and build a more connected and resilient public services in Wales. These included:

- mapping the landscape of existing collaboration and networks, to identify opportunities to strengthen connections
- mapping office locations and staffing profiles across arms-length bodies – to help to pinpoint areas where co-location or sharing of resources could support more integrated working
- identifying where, and how resources could be pooled to support joint projects
- creating more opportunities for shared learning.

Tackling the disability employment gap

On 16 September 2025 the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip wrote to all devolved Welsh public bodies following the Senedd's publication of its report 'Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: tackling the Disability Employment Gap'¹.

It encourages all devolved public bodies and public services to consider taking a range of actions, including reviewing recruitment and employment policies and practices to ensure alignment with the Disabled People's Rights Plan², taking steps to become a Disability Confident Leader and setting clear objectives focused on eliminating the disability employment gap.

In response, our teams are reviewing our existing plans and practice to identify what more we can do to make sure we are tackling the inequalities faced by disabled people in employment and wider society. We will report on our actions in more detail at our next Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee.

¹ [Anything's Achievable with the Right Support: Tackling the Disability Employment Gap](#)

² [Draft Disabled People's Rights Plan | GOV.WALES](#)