

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, ways of working, delivery 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 19 November 2025. These key activities and developments have not been covered in more detail in other Board papers.

Strengthening people's voices

Cross-Border Healthcare

People living near the Wales–England border continue to tell us that accessing care across two NHS systems can be confusing and inconsistent. Over recent months, Llais has strengthened its national influence so that these experiences are clearly understood by UK and Welsh decisionmakers.

In November 2025, members of the UK Parliament held a plenary debate on cross-border healthcare. Many of the issues raised reflected concerns we had previously shared in our written evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee and the briefing provided to MPs ahead of the debate: uncertainty about rights, differences in waiting time rules, incompatible digital systems, and limited Welsh language provision in parts of the English NHS. Our engagement ensured the debate focused on lived experience, not only policy detail.

Since then, the UK Parliament's Welsh Affairs Committee has launched a new inquiry examining rural and border healthcare in more depth. We have received a formal request from the Committee to update our evidence, and we are preparing further evidence using insight from our engagement and complaints advocacy work, including themes raised in our regional reports.

Across all of this work, our aim is to make sure that people's experiences directly shape the improvements needed. Whether supporting UK level debates, advising parliamentary inquiries or working with partners such as the Patients Association, we will continue to speak up for people in border

and rural communities so that accessing NHS care feels fair, consistent and joined-up, no matter which side of the border it is delivered on.

Rural health and care: UK Chief Medical Officers 4 Nations discussion

In January 2026, Katie Blackburn, our Powys Regional Director attended a meeting on my behalf with 4 UK Chief Medical Officers to help highlight the realities of rural and cross-border healthcare for people in Wales, as set out in our spotlight report on rural health and care. Llais used this opportunity to bring people's voices directly into a UK-wide forum, ensuring that the experiences of people living in our rural and remote areas of Wales were front and centre in the discussions.

During the discussion, senior clinical leaders from across the UK showed strong interest in Llais's work. Our contribution made sure the lived experiences of the people we represent in Wales were clearly heard at a UK level. We will continue to drive and support discussions on rural and remote health and care with colleagues and partners across the UK.

The Health and Social Care We Want: Launching the People's Priorities and People's Principles

Also in January 2026, Llais brought people's voices together with a powerful message by launching our Health and Social Care We Want and manifesto reports at the Senedd, incorporating the People's Priorities and The People's Principles. This event marked an important moment for Llais - setting out, in one place, what people across Wales have said they need from health and social care, and how services must change to meet those expectations.

The principles and priorities are rooted in what tens of thousands of people told us in community halls, high streets, GP surgeries, care homes, and online: their experiences, frustrations, hopes, and what would make the biggest difference to their lives.

At the launch, we shared the clear message we have heard repeatedly: people want health and social care that treats them as individuals, not numbers; that listens carefully and communicates clearly; and that delivers support when it is needed - not after months or years of waiting.

Our 'We Want' report showed the scale of this challenge. Almost half of people were unsure of their rights, over half did not know how to raise concerns, and many described care that felt disjointed, slow, or confusing. The vision set out in the report calls for accessible, dignified, timely, joined-up and inclusive services, built around real people's needs rather than systems.

Since the launch, these insights have shaped our work to inform and influence the priorities for a future Welsh Government, working to create a strong alliance by gathering support across Wales for the People's Principles from decisions makers, groups and organisations working in the health and social care sector.

Internally, we have framed our Annual Plan for 2026–2027 explicitly around the People’s Principles, ensuring that every activity we are involved in whether focused on waiting times, maternity and neonatal care, social care support, cross-border access, or mental health, starts with what matters most to people, as reflected in the People’s Principles.

We are embedding the principles into all our local, regional and national activities, including scrutiny and involvement in service change proposals and assessment of policy developments and proposals. The principles are also guiding how we share people’s stories in the lead-up to the 2026 Senedd election, making sure the voices we heard influence national decision-making and action.

In continuing this work, our focus is on turning the principles into visible, practical improvements - working with partners to improve communication, reduce complexity, strengthen rights awareness, and encourage services to act on what people say. The launch at the Senedd was not the end of this work, it was the beginning of a shared commitment to build a fairer, kinder, more joined-up health and social care system. One shaped by the people who rely on it every day.

Working with the Bevan Commission: our Silly Rules work

During 2025/2026 we have worked in partnership with the Bevan Commission to deliver our joint Wales-wide Silly Rules campaign. This work invited people who use and work in health and social care to tell us about the rules, processes and systems that get in the way of good care.

The campaign built on the international “Breaking the Rules for Better Care” movement and was promoted across Wales through our regional and national teams and our partner network. Over 700 submissions were received from staff and the public.

The full Silly Rules report, published in February 2026, highlights the everyday frustrations shared with us. People told us about unnecessary duplication, repetitive forms, systems that do not talk to each other, processes that slow down care, and “the way we’ve always done it” practices that no longer make sense. Many comments also reflected organisational myths - things people believed to be rules but were not, and rules that simply needed clearer interpretation or redesign.

Alongside the report, we issued a press notice and shared resource packs with partners across Wales. These explain how, together with the Bevan Commission, we will take forward the findings, including working with health boards, social care providers and national bodies to clarify rules that cause confusion, remove unnecessary steps where organisations have the power to do so, and encourage people to challenge unhelpful habits constructively.

Our next steps are already underway. We will work with teams across Llais, the Bevan Commission and the wider health and social care system to share what is changing, highlight where feedback has made a

difference, and be transparent when rules cannot be altered and why. This work will continue throughout the year as part of our commitment to work with our partners to help make services easier to use, be kinder and more responsive to the people and staff who rely on them.

All Wales Maternity and Neonatal Services Assurance Review

The publication of the All-Wales Maternity and Neonatal Assurance Assessment in February 2026 marks an important stage for families and healthcare services across Wales. For Llais, it also reflects the impact of our work over the past 2 years, and particularly the experiences shared with us by more than 500 women and families in Swansea Bay - voices that became a catalyst for this national review.

Throughout the national assessment, Llais played a key role in helping to make sure peoples' lived experience shaped the review. We contributed through the Stakeholder Panel and the Family and Community Voices Steering Group, so that people who had used or were affected by maternity and neonatal services were heard in a way that was trauma-informed, culturally sensitive and grounded in what matters to them.

The national report identified serious vulnerabilities across maternity and neonatal services, echoing what families told us: inconsistent approaches to cares, delays in care, insufficient postnatal support, workforce shortages, and pressures that undermine safe and compassionate care. At the same time, the assessment acknowledged the strengths we also heard - warm, respectful care, particularly in midwifery-led settings, and pockets of good practice around equity and inclusion.

In response to the publication, we called for urgent, decisive action from the Welsh Government and NHS Wales. We stressed that the voices families trusted us with must drive change - not just in policy, but in practice on the ground. We also reaffirmed our commitment to supporting local, regional and national, partners to respond quickly and transparently to the findings.

Our next steps are already underway. We will continue to share what we hear with Health Boards and policy leaders, monitor how services implement the review's recommendations, and maintain our focus on cultural and system change, particularly listening, communication and safe postnatal care. This includes hosting the Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership Forum.

We will also align our national and regional work programmes with the themes highlighted in the review, so that what matters to families remains at the centre of our engagement, scrutiny and advocacy across Wales.

The National Strategy for Unpaid Carers

Since our discussions at the Board meeting in November 2025, the Welsh Government has launched a public consultation on its draft National Strategy for Unpaid Carers. The consultation seeks views on the priorities

to improve recognition and support for unpaid carers, and can be seen at the following link:

[Draft national strategy for unpaid carers 2026 | GOV.WALES](#)

We are finalising our response to the draft strategy, reflecting what we consistently hear from unpaid carers across Wales. This includes the need for clearer information, easier access to support, better respite provision, and stronger recognition of carers as partners in care planning.

Our response draws on our work with unpaid carers through our community engagement activities and complaints advocacy casework across Wales. Key asks include early identification of carers, improved access to assessments, culturally appropriate support, and action to reduce financial hardship.

We have aligned our response with our wider programme of work on unpaid carers, and our submission also reflects the People's Principles, emphasising clarity, dignity, timeliness and fairness. We expect to submit our response ahead of the consultation deadline of 13 April 2026.

Llais is also represented on the Health and Social Care experts panel at the Wales Carers Assembly 2026 on 23 March 2026.

Developing our ways of working and impact

Working with the Patient and Client Council

The Patient and Client Council (PCC) is the statutory, independent voice for people across health and social care in Northern Ireland. Established in 2009, the Council's role is to make sure people are heard, involved and supported.

It does this by representing the interests of the public, promoting meaningful involvement, offering free independent advocacy for people wishing to raise concerns, and ensuring people have access to clear information about how services are designed and delivered.

The Council works across the health and social care system to connect people with decision-makers, support constructive challenge, and help services understand the lived experiences behind the data.

Its current areas of focus include improving public participation, gathering insight through engagement platforms, and strengthening the visibility of people's voices in service development and reform.

In February 2026, we were pleased to host a visit from Council's Chief Executive Meadhba Monaghan and her senior team. This was a great opportunity to hear more about each other's work and explore how our organisations can learn from one another.

The discussions highlighted our shared commitment to making sure people's voices shape health and social care, particularly at a time when systems across the UK are facing significant pressures and change.

Our conversations focused on practical ways we can collaborate - sharing insight, strengthening complaints advocacy approaches, and identifying opportunities to jointly inform and influence decision-making on issues that affect people across the UK.

The visit reaffirmed the value of building and maintaining strong relationships between citizen voice bodies and the benefits of working together to strengthen our collective ability to serve our population.

Llais all staff conference

In February 2026, staff from across Llais came together in Cardiff for a day of connection, reflection and honest conversation. The theme, 'our impact, our culture, our Llais', was about bringing together who we are, how we work, and the difference we want to make for people across Wales.

We were pleased to welcome our Chair to the conference, and Board members who joined our afternoon's Culture Canvas session, exploring what we need to build on, what we need to let go of, what we need to start doing and what we need to ask from others.

Throughout the day, colleagues shared what motivates them, what helps them thrive, and what gets in the way. The discussion was open, generous and hopeful. People recognised what is working well, while also being clear about what needs attention if we're going to continue our progress in building the culture we want and deserve.

Our reflections on the day have given us a clear roadmap to move forward. These will focus on strengthening our systems and structures, continuing to work on how we communicate and feedback with each other, supporting our culture and everyday behaviours, building connection and collaboration and encouraging creativity and innovation.

Listening to people: A new NHS complaints system for Wales

In October 2025, the Senedd approved major reforms to the way NHS Wales handles complaints, replacing Putting Things Right with a new national approach called Listening to People. This marks the biggest overhaul of complaints handling and incident investigation in NHS Wales in around 15 years.

The new system aims to introduce a clearer, more compassionate, and more consistent process for anyone raising concerns about their NHS care. It is built around a 2-stage resolution model, starting with early resolution.

The key improvements described for the new system include mandatory "listening discussions," plain-language communication, active offers of advocacy and legal support, and clear timeframes for resolving concerns.

For Llais, the introduction of Listening to People has given us an important opportunity to look at how our own Complaints Advocacy Service can best

support people through the new complaints process. We are making changes to ensure our service aligns fully with the new national model and continues to provide the clarity, reassurance and practical support that people rely on when things go wrong.

This work has also provided a valuable opportunity for our complaints advocacy teams across Wales to come together, reflect on how we work, and identify where we can strengthen our approach overall. Our focus is on building a consistent, high-quality service so that, whoever and wherever someone lives in Wales, they can expect the same quality service and standard of information, support and advocacy when raising a concern about health or social services.

As these reforms are implemented, we will monitor how the new system is working in practice and make sure what we hear from individuals and families informs ongoing improvements across NHS Wales and our own service.