

Item: 13

Title: People update - October 2026

Gweithredu / Action required	For information
Amseru / Timing	Routine
Argymhelliad / Recommendation	The board is asked to note this report.
Risg / Risk	CR1 – People and skills – retaining and developing the right mix of skills so that Llais can provide the best possible service. The report also aligns with Risk Appetite RA8, which reflects an eager appetite to support our people to work differently and improve how we do things.
Cyllid / Finance	There are no additional financial implications arising from this report. All vacant and replacement roles are included within existing budgets.
Amcan Cynllun Corfforaethol / Corporate Plan Objective/Amcan Rhaglen/ Programme objective	Objective/priority area 5 - to grow and improve as an organisation. This supports the Llais Strategy 2024–2027 and its ambition for Llais to become a mature, well-run, trusted and ambitious organisation.
Ecwiti, Amrywiaeth a Chynhwysiant / Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	We consider equity, diversity and inclusion in all our work with Llais colleagues. The updates in this report reflect these commitments where relevant.
Cyfathrebu / Communications	Please tick one of the following boxes if this activity will have an impact on: Internal: our people ☒ External: our customers/partners/stakeholders ☒

	External: our organisation's reputation ☒
Cymeradwyaeth / Approval/Clearance	Chief Executive
Trafodaethau/ Penderfyniadau Blaenorol / Previous discussions/decisions	The Board receives an update on workforce and people matters at each meeting. The accompanying People Quarterly Dashboard at Appendix 1 provides further detail.
Awdur/ Cyflwyno / Author/presenting	Jason Smith, Corporate Director of People and Resources and Rebecca Shand, Interim Director of People and Organisational Development
Dyddiad / Date	8 October 2026
Cefndir / Background	
This report provides the Board with an update on two separate but connected areas of work. - Part A: People update covers the People team, recruitment, sickness absence, performance appraisals, learning and development, colleague relations, health and safety, mileage rates and the quarterly people dashboard. - Part B: Organisational development update covers the wider work under way to strengthen Llais as an organisation, including the People and Organisational Development Strategy, Contribution and Development Policy, Llais Conversations and Location Strategy. Together, the two parts show how Llais is supporting colleagues now while developing the culture, systems and ways of working needed for the future.	
Manylion / Detail	
Part A: People update	
People team Following the former postholder leaving the organisation in August, the People team has a vacancy for a People and Organisational Development Business Partner at Band 6. The part-time role, for 30 hours a week, will be advertised in October on a 12-month fixed-term basis. An additional role of People Adviser at Band 5, will continue to provide agency support until the post is filled.	

Arrangements are still in place for the role of Director of People and Organisational Development to be covered on an interim basis. The substantive postholder is returning to work and arrangements are in place during this period to support a managed handover.

Recruitment

Four vacancies were filled during quarter two. Three fixed-term appointments cover one sabbatical and two periods of maternity leave. The Finance Officer role was filled permanently.

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership evaluated three roles during quarter two: Programme Manager, confirmed at Band 7; Executive Support Manager, confirmed at Band 6; and Advocacy and Engagement Support Officer, confirmed at Band 4. All three roles will be advertised in quarter three, reducing reliance on agency workers. The Administration Officer role is still being evaluated and is expected to be a Band 3. Once this is complete, the number of agency posts should reduce further.

Sickness absence

Long-term sickness absence remains a concern. Sickness absence for quarter 2 is reported at an average of 7.78%, representing a slight improvement compared to 7.80% in the previous quarter. However, the last individual month (September report available on the 26 September) shows a decreased level to 5.96%. The organisational target remains at 3.30%.

The reasons for absence remain varied. Mental health continues to be the most common reason. The proportion recorded as work-related fell from 40% in quarter one to 29% in quarter two. At the end of September 2026, five colleagues were absent on a long-term basis.

The People team is supporting line managers with each long-term absence case. This includes monthly meetings with colleagues and their representatives to understand their circumstances and consider reasonable adjustments that could support a return to work. Everyone who is absent long term has been offered an occupational health referral and, where appropriate, a stress risk assessment.

As colleagues prepare to return, managers discuss whether a phased return would help. During quarter two, four colleagues returned successfully after long-term sickness absence using a phased return.

As previously highlighted, menopause symptoms have contributed to several long-term absences. Although this is not recorded as a separate absence reason, colleagues have raised it consistently during absence discussions.

This is particularly relevant because 83% of Llais colleagues are women and 70% of the workforce is aged between 40 and 60. In response, the People team has developed a Menopause and Women's Health Policy and guidance for managers. Both were developed with colleagues and will be launched in quarter three.

Performance appraisals

Participation in the annual appraisal process varies across teams. During quarter two, the People team worked with line managers, sent reminders where appraisals were outstanding and offered help to record completed appraisals. At the end of September 2026, 58.72% of colleagues had an appraisal recorded on the Electronic Staff Record within the previous 12 months. This is an increase of 20.4 percentage points from quarter one. The figure includes colleagues who are absent long term or on maternity, paternity or shared parental leave.

Further work is needed so that every colleague has an annual appraisal and each appraisal is recorded accurately. Guidance on recording appraisals is now available to managers on the Llais SharePoint site. The People team will continue to monitor completion through its monthly meetings with each region.

As reported previously, appraisal data does not show the quality or value of performance and development conversations. In response to colleague feedback, a new Contribution and Development Framework and our Llais Conversations Policy, which are separate papers, have been developed to support regular one-to-one reviews between colleagues and managers. We aim for the new framework to be introduced in April 2027.

Learning and development

In August 2026 our Learning and Organisational Development Partner joined us on a 12-month fixed-term contract.

Since joining Llais, they have developed a draft Learning and Development Policy and improved the process for requesting learning and development. The draft policy supports Llais's aim to become a learning organisation. It

covers role-specific learning, mandatory training and professional development.

The improved request process is intended to remove barriers to learning and reduce delays in approving and arranging courses, qualifications and other development opportunities.

The draft policy, improved request processes and a proposed 12-month learning and development roadmap will be discussed by the Executive Team in mid-October.

Colleague relations

During quarter two, the People team supported one grievance under the Respect and Resolution Policy, one organisational change process and one internal fact-finding investigation into an allegation raised by a colleague.

Health and Safety review

Llais commissioned an independent review of its health and safety arrangements. Site inspections have been completed in Cardiff and Vale, Gwent; Neath, Port Talbot, Swansea, and West Wales. Further inspections are scheduled for North Wales and Powys.

Increase in HMRC mileage rates

HM Revenue and Customs announced in May that the approved mileage allowance payment would increase from 45p to 55p per mile from April 2026. NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership Payroll confirmed that the new rate was applied from the July pay run. Back pay covering the earlier period will be paid to colleagues in October 2026.

Quarterly dashboard

Appendix 1 contains the quarterly dashboard for 24 June to 29 September 2026. It provides more detailed analysis of the main themes in this report.

Part B: Organisational development update

Llais is taking forward a connected programme of people and organisational development work. It will strengthen how we support colleagues, develop our culture and skills, and plan for the future.

The draft People and Organisational Development Strategy, Location Strategy and Contribution and Development Policy have been considered by the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee. They are now being consulted on across Llais. Feedback from the Committee and colleagues will shape the final versions before they are presented for approval.

The Llais Conversations Policy has completed formal consultation across the organisation and has also been considered by the Workforce, Remuneration and Terms of Service Committee.

Feedback received, along with feedback from the current consultations, will shape the final approaches for all of these, which will be launched shortly. Together, this work will provide a clearer, more joined-up approach to colleague wellbeing, support, contribution and development, while helping Llais to improve as an organisation.

People and Organisational Development Strategy 2027–2030

The draft strategy sets out how Llais will strengthen its culture, leadership, skills, ways of working and support for colleagues and volunteers. Its aim is for Llais to be a compassionate, capable and connected organisation where people feel trusted, supported and able to do their best work. It recognises that how we work within Llais directly affects how well we listen to and serve people and communities across Wales.

The strategy has three commitments: supporting sustainable work and wellbeing; strengthening leadership, trust and colleague voice; and making sure our people practices are fair, inclusive and compassionate. It will support a more consistent and joined-up approach to workforce planning, leadership development, colleague involvement, recruitment, induction, development and volunteer support.

The work is planned in phases from 2027 to 2030. It will begin by putting the foundations in place, before embedding and sustaining more consistent ways of working. Organisational development will become part of everyday work rather than a separate project. We will test and develop new approaches with colleagues, share what we learn and adopt successful practice more widely.

Contribution and Development Policy



Eich llais mewn iechyd | Your voice in health
a gofal cymdeithasol | and social care

The draft Contribution and Development Policy proposes a simpler approach to the current performance appraisal and development reviews that will place more emphasis on learning and development. The current system provides structure, but separate appraisal, review and supervision processes can lead to repeated conversations and records. The new approach will focus more clearly on each colleague's contribution, impact, confidence, skills and development.

It will bring together regular Llais conversations, flexible objectives, reflection on relevant behaviours, proportionate discussions of capability, a personal development plan and a formal annual review. The policy reflects a move away from a once-a-year assessment towards regular feedback, learning, clarity and support.

Colleagues will have a stronger role in shaping their objectives and development, alongside seeking peer feedback. Individual objectives will link directly to the relevant team work plan, which will feed into the organisational annual plan, which in turn supports delivery of our organisational strategy. This clear thread will help every colleague understand how their role and day-to-day work contributes to the wider aims of Llais.

Managers will remain responsible for setting clear expectations, giving timely feedback and addressing concerns fairly. Objectives can be updated when priorities or circumstances change. This policy should reduce unnecessary form-filling, strengthen the connection between individual contribution and organisational priorities, and make sure annual reviews reflect conversations held throughout the year rather than raising issues for the first time.

Llais Conversations

The Llais Conversations Policy provides one framework for regular conversations about workload, wellbeing, support, feedback and development. For colleagues working in complaints advocacy, it also includes structured practice supervision. This covers complex cases, professional judgement, ethical questions, boundaries and the emotional demands of the work.

Colleagues will have an active role in shaping conversations, which will focus on what is working, what is getting in the way and what practical action would help. Conversations will take place at least every two months, with more frequent practice conversations for relevant advocacy colleagues. This

should help identify workload, wellbeing, support and development needs earlier, and reduce the risk of avoidable surprises at formal reviews.

Anonymised themes from Llais Conversations will be brought together to shape learning, guidance, people priorities and wider organisational decisions. This will connect colleagues' day-to-day experiences more closely with organisational improvement. It will help Llais identify patterns, respond sooner and continue developing as a compassionate, capable and connected organisation.

Location Strategy

The draft Location Strategy provides a consistent way to decide what locations, workplaces and community access arrangements Llais needs across Wales. These decisions are about more than just buildings. They affect how easily people can reach us, as well as independence, confidentiality, accessibility, Welsh language provision, the safety of colleagues and volunteers, sustainability and value for the public.

The main proposed approach is a function-first approach. Rather than starting with an existing office or preferred building, each review will begin by asking what people, communities, colleagues and volunteers need the location to provide. Different arrangements may therefore be suitable in different parts of Wales. These could include permanent offices, shared bases, bookable rooms, community venues or a flexible mix of options. A consistent review process will define what is needed, assess realistic options, compare the evidence and clearly record the recommendation and decision. This will make decisions more transparent and evidence-informed, while allowing Llais to respond to different local and organisational needs.

Argymhellion/ Recommendations

The Board is asked to Note this report