

**Welsh Government Remit Letter to the NHS Wales Executive
2024 – 25**

Remit Letter 2024/25

Ministerial priorities have primacy in the formulation of the annual remit letter and all 'Expectations' set out below have been updated in line with the NHS Wales Planning Framework for 2024-2027. They provide clarity on the response required from the NHS Executive as they develop a 2024-25 work programme.



20231218 - LETTER FROM MINISTER - FINCEs re NHS Wales PI



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There is an expectation that the Executive 'Senior Leadership Team' (SLT) target the *collective* resources to deliver on these expectations. In addition, and to support the delivery of the NHS Executive's workplan for 2024/2025, *individual* National Directors (SLT members) will agree a set of professional individual objectives with their HSSG Executive Director lead and an agreed local workplan for their programme/function. This delivers against individual accountabilities as set out in the Annual Accountability & Allocation Letter issued from the Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Wales each year.

In all aspects the intention is that Quality, Safety and Improvement underpin the Expectations, driving improvements in the delivery of healthcare, leading to better health, social care wellbeing outcomes for the people of Wales.

The NHS Executive must take an evidence-based approach to identifying ways to improve patients' outcomes and services. Research and development play a crucial role in that and should be seen as an enabler to quality improvement. The NHS Executive can support the need to embed a research culture to drive sustainable improvements.

The NHS Executive should be cognisant of climate related commitments and legislative targets, including decarbonisation plans and the ambition for the public sector to be collectively net zero by 2030. The NHS Executive needs to ensure the NHS is climate resilient and delivers broader social value, as part of contributing to achieving the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and as commitments and opportunities to build in actions and benefits as part of service planning.

Given the commitments as part of the Welsh Government's 'A Healthier Wales' strategy to develop seamless local health and social care models, primary and community care needs to underpin the whole system, at the local, regional, and national level. The accelerated cluster development and community infrastructure

needs to be maximised in order to ensure that primary and community care services are robust and can function effectively.

Collective Response to NHS Priority System Issues

Recognising the progress of the NHS Executive Senior Leadership Team during the first transitional year of the NHS Executive's existence, a number of key system issues are being identified and which will become **agreed priority areas** on which to focus the NHS Executive's collective effort in its 2024/25 work plan.

These priorities have the potential to make significant progress on all the following Expectations set out in the 2024/25 Remit Letter and - crucially - deliver on the overall objective of the NHS Executive to reduce variation, achieve better and more equitable outcomes for patients, improve access and patient experience and secure improvements in population health.

In addition, the Welsh Government Expectations are shown below and grouped under the following broad headings:

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QUALITY, SAFETY AND IMPROVEMENT

Expectation 1: The NHS Executive will oversee a system with quality and learning at its heart.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will seek assurances about quality at a strategic level by working with partners to develop relevant national outcome indicators and performance improvement measures. The NHS Executive will ensure how such information can be made more publicly visible; and by monitoring the implementation of the Duty of Quality and the Duty of Candour by NHS bodies under the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020.

Quality planning– The NHS Executive will provide support to the NHS in Wales to enable it to plan effectively by ensuring the [Duty of Quality](#) is being enacted by NHS Wales organisations and that services are being planned strategically and delivered in accordance with the attributes of quality. The NHS Executive will also ensure that NHS Wales planning is based on accurate data, including patient experience data and that they play a central role in defining, with appropriate parts of the system, the wider approach to data gathering and use.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will share good practice and demonstrate system leadership in quality improvement by supporting specific

programmes and through the intelligent use of data and other information. This should include information gathered by the NHS Executive's National Quality Management System (NQMS); and by benchmarking and triangulating this information across services to inform performance and assurance activities.

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES, NETWORKS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL CLINICAL FRAMEWORK

Expectation 2: The NHS Executive will drive forward the implementation of key Welsh Government policy requirements, including Quality Statements, to address unwarranted variation in care in clinical services.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will seek assurances about quality at a clinical level by developing and agreeing national outcomes, indicators and performance improvement measures, including experience measures, for people, and where appropriate, for those close to them.

Quality planning - The NHS Executive will support national programmes, clinical and expert networks to develop detailed service specifications and outcome focussed commissioning frameworks to support the planning and accountability arrangements for the NHS and partners in Wales.

Quality improvement - The NHS Executive will ensure health boards are improving specific services and outcomes by using continuous citizen involvement, shifting care upstream, evidence-based systems, peer review approaches, tools and methodologies to improve and monitor patient outcomes and service sustainability using the principles of Value Based Healthcare to guide improvements.

Expectation 3: Primary and Community Care - Demonstrate a focus on improving access and shifting resources into primary and community care.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will provide Welsh Government with regular reports on progress, identifying areas where potential measures, actions or intervention is needed to support decision making.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will provide system leadership and oversight of the national programme, and other national programmes, including an implementation plan for the primary and community care element of delivery of the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care and the Enhanced Community Care agenda, ensuring implementation is considered as part of planning and reporting frameworks (e.g. IMTPs).

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will ensure evidence-based systems and peer review approaches are utilised to achieve sustainable and robust services, integrated through accelerated cluster development and community infrastructure around the patient.

Expectation 4: Urgent and Emergency Care - Workstream deliverables are to be achieved in line with the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will provide Welsh Government with regular reports on progress, identifying areas where potential measures, actions or intervention is needed to support decision making.

Quality planning– The NHS Executive will provide system leadership and oversight of the national programme ‘Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care’, and other national programmes, and ensuring implementation is considered as part of planning and reporting frameworks (e.g. IMTPs). Through leadership and co-ordination, the NHS Executive will ensure national, regional, and local opportunities are driven by the Six Goals for Urgent and Emergency Care including those that enhance the shift of resources.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will ensure evidence-based systems and peer review approaches are utilised to achieve sustainable and robust services, integrated through accelerated cluster development and community infrastructure around the patient.

Expectation 5: Enhanced Care in the Community - reduce delays for patients, enhance community care, improve care closer to home and support the transfer of resources into primary and community care.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will provide oversight of progress against the national programme expectations and ensure this is reported through in the collective review of organisational plans and the Minimum Data Set.

Quality planning– The NHS Executive will develop a recognised model of community care for the population of Wales, and support organisations to provide seamless care, delivered at a local level, consistently regardless of organisational boundaries. It will produce tools that will assist organisation in the delivery of new service models and the shift of resources into the community.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will ensure a collaborative approach of sharing good practice exists within the workstreams at a regional partnership board level and through Primary and Community Care Clusters.

Expectation 6: Planned Care and Cancer – Reduction in the people experiencing the longest waits for outpatients and treatment ensuring equity including for women and children.

The management of people on the waiting list (safely waiting) to ensure they are ready for what they are waiting for, they are not waiting unnecessarily or becoming too unfit to proceed to the intervention.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will provide Welsh Government with regular progress reports on planned care and inform decisions to improve planned care and cancer recovery. The NHS Executive must monitor and report the reduction in unwarranted variation and low value interventions.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will lead the national programme and ensure that organisations focus on delivery of a reduction in the longest waits for care and treatment. Priority focus will be on the efficient utilisation of capacity and bringing services into balance. The NHS Executive will continue to lead the implementation plan for the national diagnostic strategy and provide leadership and co-ordination to ensure regional and local options are driven by optimal clinical pathways, in line with the Value and Sustainability Board themes, where appropriate.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will ensure evidence base systems and peer review approaches such as (Getting it Right First Time) GIRFT and Value in Health are utilised to improve planned care and cancer outcomes for patients. The NHS Executive will enable tumour site peer groups to support improvement on pathways in each organisation.

Expectation 7: Mental Health Services (all-age) - Provide system leadership and oversight to deliver the integration of improvements across all age services and equity and parity between physical and mental health services.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will deliver improvements in patient safety in mental health services by providing oversight and link in with NHS Wales quality assurance mechanisms to ensure mental health services are assessed in line with ministerial priorities set out in the planning framework. The NHS Executive will also support health boards to establish robust quality control processes to support improved experience and outcomes.

The NHS Executive will also support health boards to participate in national Audit programmes.

Other areas:

The NHS Executive will support the implementation of the Dementia Care Standards in recognition of the dementia programme, sitting currently within Improvement Cymru (to be fully integrated into the NHS Executive structure by 1 April 2024). It is noted that the current Dementia Action Plan is being evaluated, with the evaluation due for publication in late summer. Longer term governance of dementia policy will be considered alongside the findings of the evaluation.

The NHS Executive will support the delivery of sexual assault referral centres through a national programme that will manage relationships with partners and develop joint commissioning arrangements.

Quality planning – Through the Strategic Programme for Mental Health and Clinical Networks the NHS Executive will drive the transformation of all-Mental Health Services, moving to a more standardised offer across health boards. The Strategic Programme for Mental Health will be shaped to align with the priority areas set out in the new Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy. [Draft mental health and wellbeing strategy | GOV.WALES](#)

The Strategic Programme will reflect an integrated health and social services approach to provide mental health support and align with the Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan. It will also aim to support better integration of mental health across the Primary Care, Planned Care and Urgency, Emergency Care Programmes and

better support co-occurring conditions such as substance misuse and neurodevelopment. We also expect close working with the new NHS Wales Joint Commissioning Committee to ensure a whole pathway approach to mental health improvements.

Clinical Networks will focus on improvements to CAMHS, Eating Disorders, Perinatal and Adult/Older Person Mental Health. The NHS Executive will also lead improvements through the Access to Psychological Interventions and Therapies Programme and the Suicide and Self-harm prevention programme.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will support the recovery of waiting time performance for all age LPMHSS assessment and interventions, specialist CAMHS as well as improving performance for psychological therapies. The NHS Executive will also make recommendations to strengthen quality and performance measures for mental health services to better reflect service models.

Through the establishment of the Mental Health Patient Safety Programme, the NHS Executive will drive national quality improvement programmes and build capacity and capability to support the implementation of improvement plans.

Expectation 8: NHS Planning and networks – providing strategic oversight and expert support to national programmes and clinical networks. This includes improvement, change and delivery.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will work with clinical and professional leaders and Network leads to support consistent approaches, development of outcome indicators and performance improvement measures to support the networks and support maturity.

This work includes agreeing standards and models of care and consistency on how outcomes, performance and activity is measured. It will also inform what good practice should be adopted nationally.

Quality planning – the NHS Executive will ensure that there is a consistent, partnership and integrated approach for all networks with collaboration and improvement of population outcomes at the centre of the work.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will ensure clinical and professional leadership and collective input is utilised so that evidence-based decisions and best practice inform pathways and care standards and that variations are reduced in line with Value in Health.

- National programmes and implementation networks will also be a mechanism to support improvement, change (including innovation and value and an ongoing shift to prevention) and delivery.
- Programmes set out 'what good looks like' and the expectations for delivery across health and partners in social care, the independent and third sectors.

Expectation 9: Preventing ill-health, enhancing maternal and neonatal experience and improving outcomes for women and children through the establishment of effective clinical network programmes, delivery of quality improvement activities and robust monitoring of quality measures.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will develop, monitor and review local and national maternity and neonatal quality outcome and experience measures through an integrated perinatal dashboard. It will develop and maintain a system for the early identification of issues and emerging risks (early warning system), as well as identify and coordinate immediate corrective action to return the issues/risk to being under control. The NHS Executive will escalate issues/risks as appropriate through the quality control, oversight and assurance mechanisms established between the Welsh Government, the NHS Executive and NHS Wales organisations.

Quality planning– The NHS Executive will support better planning of services for women and children by developing strategic clinical networks for Children’s Health and Women’s Health and supporting them to drive forward key improvements in children’s and women’s health services and outcomes including through an improved focus on health promotion. It will also support the development of Quality Statements for Maternity and Neonatal Care and Children’s Health and underpinning service specifications, pathways and guidance.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will plan, deliver and monitor the Maternity and Neonatal Safety Support Programme (phase two). NHS Executive will request quality contributions from Children's Health / Women's Health Policy and work with partners to further develop maternity and neonatal leadership and workforce.

Expectation 10: National Immunisation - Lead the implementation of the National Immunisation Framework (NIF) for Wales.

Quality assurance– The NHS Executive will oversee delivery of vaccination programmes and support NHS organisations to achieve the measures outlined in the NHS Performance Framework. Specifically, the uptake targets relating to the childhood immunisation, HPV and winter respiratory vaccination programmes.

The NHS Executive will explore a range of quality and safety metrics with sustainable improvements achieved through the development of networks which are focused on coproduction and expertise.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will continue to lead the NIF programme and implement a workplan agreed with Welsh Government to ensure the expectations set out are delivered.

The NHS Executive will also coordinate NHS planning to stand up new vaccination programmes to protect Welsh citizens, as they are developed. This may include protection against RSV and Varicella, and make changes to existing programmes, such as the childhood immunisation programme.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will support the improvement of uptake and the reduction in vaccination equity gaps across our vaccination programmes by

working with NHS organisations to facilitate fair access and opportunity to vaccination.

Expectation 11: Safeguarding adults and children at risk – greater oversight and assurance from NHS Wales organisations.

Quality assurance- The NHS Executive will strengthen and provide oversight of safeguarding arrangements to ensure the Chief Nursing Officer and Director General and Ministers have sufficient, meaningful assurance that NHS is delivering against its safeguarding statutory responsibilities via the collection of a minimum data set.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will develop relevant standards and metrics.

Quality improvement - The NHS Executive, working in partnership with the National Safeguarding service and Regional Safeguarding Boards, will ensure a collaborative approach of sharing good practice informed by current and pending changes in legislation and statutory guidance and learning from recent safeguarding reviews, inspections and recommendations.

Expectation 12: Working with the National Office for Social Care and other programme support – Implementation.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will explore a range of learning disability quality and safety metrics with sustainable improvements achieved through the development of networks which are focused on quality, coproduction and expertise.

Quality planning –The NHS Executive will work to ensure a consistent approach ensuring people receive appropriate care and support from across the partner organisations. The NHS Executive will ensure the implementation of other national programmes of improvement of health services, and the Learning Disabilities Strategic Action Plan 2022-2026 to reduce health inequalities and avoidable deaths amongst people with a learning disability.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will lead on a programme of quality improvement which will improve services and experiences of people with a learning disability, including reducing the impact of known health inequalities and unwarranted variation. This will support people to live fulfilled lives in the community through the provision of high quality, prudent and sustainable specialist healthcare and improve how data is collected and analysed.

INTEGRATED PLANNING (INCLUDING FINANCIAL PLANNING)

Expectation 13: Financial Planning - Ensure that NHS Wales, and all its organisations, plan and utilise its resources optimally and has clear long-term plans to support financial sustainability. It will support the implementation of the Value and Sustainability Board requirements at pace.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will ensure a system that NHS Wales allocates and utilises its resources in a way that delivers the best outcomes that matter to patients we serve within the NHS Wales. It will support NHS Wales and its

individual organisations to be in sustainable financial health whilst meeting future system challenges.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will routinely provide meaningful and insightful intelligence to support NHS Wales in maximising the utilisation of its resources and delivering best value for all resources deployed. It will ensure that NHS Wales, and all its organisations, plan and utilise its resources optimally and has clear long-term plans to support financial sustainability.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will support a system of financial management excellence; with best practice identified, developed, shared, and deployed to deliver the best standards for NHS Wales.

Expectation 14: Planning - Support Welsh Government in the delivery of Ministerial Directions and priorities set out in the NHS Wales Planning Framework.

Quality assurance– The NHS Executive will participate in and inform the integrated assessment of organisational plans and support the quality assurance processes by providing the planning impact and delivery assessment when the IMTPs / plans are received from NHS Wales. This includes analysis of the Minimum Data Set returns when submitted alongside the IMTPs, as well as any required in-year updates. The NHS Executive will also provide an analysis of the Ministerial templates that are provided alongside IMTPs/ MDS.

The NHS Executive will also support the in-year monitoring and delivery of organisational plans and the planning framework 24-27 to inform potential actions and interventions, separate to the support given to maintaining performance and the performance framework.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will support Welsh Government in strengthening the annual Integrated Medium-Term Planning (IMTP) cycles, engaging with NHS organisations in the development and assessment of their plans. Working in partnership with NHS Wales bodies, the NHS Executive will strengthen and support the planning and delivery of services across organisational boundaries, including regional planning and develop a National Plan.

Quality improvement - The NHS Executive will support the Planning Programme for Learning to continue to nurture planning capacity and capability across the NHS, as well as continuing the develop planning as a profession across NHS Wales.

Expectation 15: NHS Emergency Planning, Resilience and Response.

Quality assurance - The NHS Executive will co-ordinate assurances from responders and support the review from an improvement perspective of any NHS Wales emergency plans for major incidents, specific national risks and high-profile events, deliver national countermeasures deployment plans. The NHS Executive will also publish an NHS Wales Annual Emergency Planning Report Survey.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will support Welsh Government in national operational planning and delivery to ensure the system is in a state of readiness. The

NHS Executive will inform Welsh Government in the delivery of the provision of operational emergency planning guidance and setting of associated standards.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will seek to provide options for improving the way in which organisations undertake and report emergency planning, within the scope of the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and regulations made under this Act. The NHS Executive will ensure that the Duty of Quality and the 12 quality standards play an active part in the methodologies that are used and adopted.

Expectation 16: Data, Technology, Innovation and Value (DTIV)

Quality assurance- DTIV will develop, with DHCW and Welsh Government, a process and programme by which core national data sets and standards for national programmes and clinical networks are developed, reviewed and implemented and compliance monitored. DTIV will establish a framework for clinical audit and associated clinical coding frameworks in partnership with DHCW. Data assets will be developed to understand quality issues and risks, and inform future national programme plans. Enhanced intelligence and analysis will be core to quality circle informing value-based care processes, value and sustainability programmes and broader transformation activities.

Quality planning - DTIV will act as the core central function to lead the commissioning and planning of the digital, data and innovation requirements for national programmes, networks, and improvement activity – acting as the ‘intelligent customer’ for any partner agencies e.g. Digital Healthcare Wales (DHCW) /Life Sciences Hub(LSH)/Health Technology Wales (HTW) – it will prioritise, and coordinate asks from programmes and identify DTIV dependencies and alignments across NHS Executive programmes. It will be the central point of contact for DHCW/LSH/HTW and other key agencies.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will develop data, intelligence, and capacity to underpin and provide insight to all NHS Executive functions, thereby delivering the objective of turning data into knowledge. The NHS Executive will act as central point on National Data Resource (NDR) developments and proposals on dataset developments for national programmes to ensure consistency of approach and design. Core to this will be development of analytical and intelligence resources that inform and underpin wider quality and performance improvement identification, prioritisation and impact assessment across all of the NHS Executive and its activities

The NHS Executive will establish a singular approach to innovation and wider use of technologies across the national programmes, including evaluation and evidence collection, working with health boards to scale solutions. It will support service reconfiguration workstream within value and sustainability programme, and embed digital, value, data initiatives within this programme includes delivery of technology enabled care programmes and automation/Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiatives.

PERFORMANCE & DELIVERY

Expectation 17: Oversight and assurance of NHS Wales - Provide oversight and lead the quality assurance process of NHS Wales organisations against Welsh Government priorities and standards.

Quality assurance – The NHS Executive will provide regular updates to Welsh Government on national programmes progress in delivering key ministerial priorities. Respond as key stakeholders in the development of a quality management system aligned to an integrated performance framework for 2025/26.

Quality planning – The NHS Executive will provide a collective intelligence assessment of all individual NHS organisations and escalate issues as part of the NHS Wales quality & delivery assurance cycle. This cycle will be Inclusive of national clinical audit, value-based interventions, qualitative assessments, performance framework and quality statements.

Quality improvement – The NHS Executive will work with Welsh Government to support NHS Wales in corrective and/or improvement interventions specifically in areas recognised as high priority e.g. organisations in enhanced escalation levels, needing service sustainability, and/or with quality issues.

VALUE & SUSTAINABILITY

Expectation 18: Value and Sustainability -The Executive must support the Value and Sustainability thematic agenda ensuring that opportunities to reduce waste, harm and variation are exploited.

Quality assurance - The NHS Executive will monitor and report improvements and impact to the Value and Sustainability Board periodically as required:

- reducing unwarranted variation and low value interventions.
- increasing administrative efficiency, to enable a reduction in administrative and management costs as a proportion of the spend base.

The NHS Executive will continue to drive progress in reducing the reliance on high-cost agency staff.

Quality planning - The NHS Executive will support organisations to ensure that there is a consistent and significant impact of implementing work plans on a local and national basis in line with the Value and Sustainability Board requirements.

Quality improvement - The NHS Executive will identify and support opportunities on the following themes and report to the Value and Sustainability Board periodically as required:

- Ensuring strengthened ‘Once for Wales’ arrangements in respect of key workforce enablers such as recruitment, and digital.
- Maximising opportunities for regional working
- Redistributing resources to community and primary care where appropriate and maximising the opportunities offered by key policies such as ‘Further Faster’.