

Social Partnership Duty Annual Report

2024-2025

Hywel Dda University Health Board

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the commitment and actions taken by Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDdUHB) to comply with the Social Partnership Duty under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023 since 1st April 2024.

The duty requires public bodies to engage meaningfully with workforce representatives and other stakeholders to promote fair work, improve well-being, and deliver better public services and to publish an Annual Report for submission to the Social Partnership Council.

This report has been prepared in collaboration with our trade union colleagues across both Agenda for Change and Medical and Dental staff groups.

2. Our approach in Hywel Dda University Health Board

HDdUHB is committed to fostering collaboration with our workforce, trade unions, and external partners to ensure inclusive decision-making and continuous improvement in health services across West Wales. In preparation for the Social Partnership Duty legislation which came into effect on 1st April 2024, we worked with our trade union colleagues to better understand the legislation and how we could implement the legislation to best effect. During our planned meetings, for example our Partnership Forums, Local Negotiating Committees and meetings with our trade union leads, we consider how we can embed the duty into key issues and concerns that arise and reference the Act in terms of how we should work jointly on the solutions.

Our Trade Union representatives continue to support our disrupted approach to policy review and continue to be integral to it. This approach has been positive and has brought benefits for all our staff through a simplified, streamlined and often principles led approach to resolution which also reduces time to review during the next policy review cycle.

The Chair of our Staff Partnership Forum and our Head of Workforce jointly attended the Welsh Government Social Partnership event held in Cardiff in July 2024. This provided the Health Board us with a positive opportunity for us to jointly focus on what social partnership working meant for us as an organisation. We were invited by Welsh Government to present a joint workshop at the next Social Partnership Duty Conference in Swansea on the benefits of social partnership working in Hywel Dda.

During the preparation for this workshop, we were able to evidence that we were already embedding well some aspects of the legislation. We received good feedback from Welsh Government and participants who followed up with us in

person after the session and in the days following the event.

We continue to build on the good work undertaken over the last couple of years with our trade union colleagues and have separated out strategic and operational discussions into distinct pathways which enable issues to be considered and resolved in a more streamlined manner and at the appropriate level. We have a monthly meeting with the trade union leads (for Agenda for Change staff) on strategy with the Director of Workforce & Organisational Development/Deputy Chief Executive and fortnightly meetings with our Assistant Director of People Management and Head of Organisation Relations. This framework supports the timely raising and resolution of issues that also assist the flow of our more formal quarterly partnership forum meetings. We also discuss forthcoming legislative changes that impact our staff and seek their views on our work in this area.

We are also building on the structure of our agenda setting with all our trade union colleagues including those representing our medical and dental workforce via the Local Negotiating Committee (LNC) and are also working with our trade unions to re-map our consultative forums in line with the re-structured Operations Directorate into Clinical Care Groups to ensure we have the right people available to meet with our trade union colleagues.

The Health Board developed Well-being Objectives collaboratively in 2019 to demonstrate our long-term aims and ambitions to embed the implementation of the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015*. This Act provides a legally-binding common purpose for public bodies – via seven well-being goals which are underpinned by a ‘sustainable development principle’ which outlines five ways of working, Figure 1 below.

Seven Well-being Goals and Five Ways of Working



Source: *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, 2015*. Welsh Government.

Our Well-being objectives are linked to 4 overarching themes to include Workforce Planning and Development, Collaboration, Involvement and Integration, Early Intervention & Prevention, and Environment & Climate Change.

Work undertaken by our staff and partners is published annually in our ‘Well-being of Future Generations Act Annual Report’ (‘Well-being Report’), which includes a comprehensive engagement process, involving staff groups, professional bodies and Trade Unions – reflecting a key well-being objective.

Our most recent Well-being Report (2023-2024) outlined our Well-being Objectives with case study examples to support each objective and are illustrated as Figure 2.



Figure 2: HDdUHB Well-being Objectives and Case Study examples, Well-Being Objective Annual Report 2023-2024

Our long-term Strategy, ‘A Healthier Mid and West Wales’ (2019) is being refreshed as part of a public consultation process commencing in the Autumn of 2025. As part of this, the Health Board will be reviewing the current Well-being Objectives and be seeking consensus specifically with representatives from Trade Union, LNC and the HDdUHB Staff Partnership Forum. We want to ensure the objectives continue to reflect our organisational values and strategic aims and remain relevant and effective. These updated objectives will form a fundamental part of the revised long

term Strategy consultation.

3. Governance and Oversight

HDdUHB governance and oversight are fundamental to ensuring accountability, transparency, and effective decision-making across all levels of the organisation. Social partnership principles are embedded in our commitment to fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

3.1. Social Partnership Structures

To embed social partnership principles, we have:

- A well-established local and HB wide Partnership Forum structure to engage with our TU colleagues.
- Integrated social partnership considerations into board-level decision-making.
- Ensured regular engagement with local and national workforce advisory groups.
- Begun reviewing our Trade Union Facilities Agreement to reflect the new duty.
- Held Workshops with our trade union colleagues following our Staff Partnership Forums on specific issues such as Wealth Health Circular 17, our new Operations Directorate and how we may need to amend our consultative meeting structure to ensure it remains fit for purpose and equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Continued to work with our LNC colleagues to improve our joint working through extension of invitations to key working groups and more frequent discussions outside the formal meeting structure with the TU side Joint Chair.
- Have TU reps on various Working Groups e.g. Nurse Retention, Stabilisation, Health & Wellbeing, Clinical Services Plan, Job Matching etc.
- Established TU Health & Safety group supported by the HDUHB Health & Safety team.

3.2 Leadership Commitment

The Chief Executive and HDdUHB Board members actively champion social partnership principles. There is a designated Social Partnership Lead to ensure compliance with the duty and oversee partnership engagement and we have an independent member drawn from our trade union representatives whose remit includes membership on our People, Organisational Development & Culture Committee.

4. Workforce Engagement and Fair Work

HDdUHB Workforce and Organisations Development and Procurement teams have actively contributed to a collaborative effort through the Public Service Board (PSB) in Ceredigion to develop a Fair Work Charter, with the intention of implementing a similar approach across the other counties.

This initiative aligns with broader goals in Ceredigion PSB's Well-being Plan 2024-2028 and aims to promote fair, inclusive, and equitable working conditions across all member organisations. All member organisations are expected to adopt and advance the Charter's principles in their workplaces. Progress will be measured as part of the current Well-being Plan until 2028.

HDdUHB conduct quarterly engagement sessions with staff and trade union representatives to address workforce concerns, have implemented Fair Work principles, including secure contracts, fair pay, and opportunities for progression and enhanced staff well-being initiatives, including mental health support and flexible working options.

4.1 Service Co-Production with Staff and Partners

HDdUHB have developed and implemented a number of programmes and initiatives as part of service co-production. These include:

- Designing and embedding workforce planning strategies & methodologies with input from clinical and corporate teams
- Piloted a staff-led innovation scheme to improve service delivery.
- Strengthened collaboration with social care providers to improve integrated patient care.
- Worked collaboratively on regional programmes creating benefits for partners, staff and patients.

4.2 Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The Health Board has established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Task Force and members within the Staff Partnership Forum are helping to drive forward this key area of work.

Hywel Dda is the only Health Board in Wales to offer a dedicated Community Development Outreach Team (CDOT) supporting refugees, asylum seekers, travellers and diverse communities.

We have introduced policies to promote inclusivity in recruitment and career progression and provided training on unconscious bias, cultural competency, and anti-discrimination.

4.3 Sustainable Public Services and Procurement

The Health Board can demonstrate sustainable Public Services and Procurement as the following has been actioned:

- Embedded Fair Work and social value criteria into procurement processes.
- Partnered with local suppliers to support community wealth-building.
- Ensured ethical employment practices across contracted services.

5. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Identifying challenges and lessons learned is crucial for continuous improvement. Helping us solve problems, foster growth, promote transparency, and inform future strategies.

5.1 Challenges

The Health Board has identified the following as notable challenges in carrying out the requirements of the Duty:

- Balancing operational demands with meaningful engagement.
- Ensuring consistency in partnership working across departments.
- Addressing recruitment and retention challenges within the workforce.
- Additional responsibilities placed on TU representatives are impacting capacity to meet increasing demands.

5.2 Lessons Learned

In undertaking the requirements of the Act, it is important to ensure:

- Early and continuous engagement leads to more effective policy development, review and implementation.
- Strong leadership commitment is critical to fostering a culture of partnership.
- Embedding Fair Work and social value in procurement requires ongoing supplier engagement.

6. Future Priorities

HDdUHB has identified the following priorities:

- Advocate for and develop frameworks to strengthen change management practices and service transformation in collaboration with frontline staff and Trade Union representatives.
- Expand partnership working with third-sector organisations and community groups.
- Actively promote the Social Partnership Module in ESR to all trade union representatives and all staff and monitor completion rates.
- Consider developing targeted training programmes on social partnership, workforce rights, and leadership development to embed a culture of continuous learning.
- Promote understanding of Trade Union roles and foster constructive engagement with senior leadership across HDUHB.
- Making social partnership a key pillar of leadership and management training would ensure that future leaders within the Health Board fully understand and commit to these principles.
- Develop a monitoring framework to measure the impact of social partnership initiatives.

- Consider embedding learning analytics, using insights from engagement sessions and policy implementations to continuously refine workforce development strategies.

7. Conclusion

HDdUHB remains committed to upholding the principles of social partnership, ensuring that our workforce and stakeholders play an active role in shaping the future of healthcare across the region.

Through continuous engagement, collaboration, and shared decision-making, we aim to improve working conditions, enhance service quality, and deliver better health outcomes for the people of West Wales.