

Grŵp Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Dirprwy Brif Weithredwr, GIG Cymru

Health and Social Services Group
Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

**Chief Executives of Local Health Boards and NHS Trusts
Directors of Social Services, Local Authorities
Chairs / Leads, Regional Partnership Boards**

Our Ref: NW/A58841268

14 July 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Planning Together for Winter 2025/26 – Expectations and key actions

As we approach the autumn period, the Welsh Government is setting out clear expectations for the development and delivery of robust winter plans across health and social care organisations and their partners.

The late autumn and winter period will bring predictable seasonal pressures, compounded by ongoing system challenges, and it is essential that we act early and collaboratively to mitigate risks to patient safety and service resilience. This should build on the positive progress made by health and social care partners through the 50-day integrated health and social care challenge in 2024/2025.

1. Key areas of focus

The Cabinet Secretary hosted a national Winter Summit meeting on 31 March 2025 at which key actions were proposed towards enabling more resilient services over Winter 2025/2026 following a difficult period last year. In addition, Welsh Government Officials hosted an event in May with key system leaders and stakeholder to reflect on the learning and work achieved through the 50-Day Integrated Care Winter Challenge and Care Action Committee, to ensure our planning for this winter took account of valuable feedback that has helped shaped the way forward.

Key actions have been distilled into three key areas of focus and regional winter plans must include clear actions and contingencies against the following:



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1. **Building community capacity to support care closer to home** through:
 - Prevention
 - Proactive / early intervention
 - Urgent response; and
 - 'Step Up' enhanced community care and multi professional wrap around care
2. **Maximise available acute and community hospital capacity** - ensuring there is sufficient Emergency Department and hospital capacity during peaks in demand to reduce risk of harm for people requiring emergency care
3. **Optimal hospital patient flow and a home first approach** - Strengthen discharge planning and patient flow to reduce delays and promote supported recovery at home

A 'Planning Together for Winter' guidance toolkit, featuring the key actions for delivery and good practice guidance, in addition to a self-assessment template are enclosed to support your integrated regional planning.

2. Timely submission of regional integrated self-assessments against Welsh Government guidance

We expect you to work collaboratively and regionally to review the enclosed guidance toolkit and use the self-assessment template to assure yourselves that your regional integrated planning for Winter 2025/2026 aligns to the Welsh Government's expectations.

Utilising Regional Partnership Board's as the coordination mechanism, please submit a completed self-assessment template and assurance that the review has been undertaken in partnership between health boards, NHS Trusts, local authorities, primary care, social care partners, and third sector organisations where appropriate, by **12 September 2025**. Please send returns to UrgentAndEmergencyCare.GovernmentBusiness@gov.wales. Instructions on completing the template are included within the template itself.

To complement your self-assessment template, we will also issue additional correspondence and guidance in July to support development of robust operational resilience plans for the period *22 December – 13 January 2026*.

Regional Partnership Boards also manage, and can help coordinate other discretionary resources/grants, that are available alongside core budgets to support our ambitions of building community capacity to deliver better outcomes for people and improve system performance – annex 1. Partners need to be planning and working together strategically to ensure alignment of investment and secure the greatest impact and value for money when developing operational resilience plans.

3. Data and monitoring

Organisations must ensure real-time data sharing and reporting mechanisms are in place to support system oversight and rapid response. This includes daily situation reporting and escalation protocols.

Performance against key outcomes / KPIs will be monitored through existing performance management routes at a national level to help reduce the burden on partners. This will be supported by the Integrated Community Care System (ICCS) meeting arrangements,

overseen by the Cabinet Secretary (3 times a year) and officials (bi-monthly), which will be established from September 2025.

4. National enabling activity

A range of enabling action is under development by national partners including the development of vaccination campaigns, a training programme for operational managers, communications campaigns and evidence-based modelling.

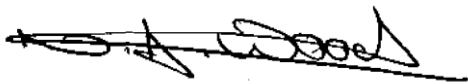
5. Learning from previous winters

All plans should incorporate insights gained from the 2024/25 winter period, including feedback provided by staff, patients, and system partners. Enclosed is a summary closure report on the '50-day challenge' 2024/2025, which we recommend reviewing and utilising during the development of regional plans.

We recognise the significant effort required to prepare for winter and thank you for your continued collaboration, leadership and commitment.

If you have any questions or require further guidance, please contact UrgentAndEmergencyCare.GovernmentBusiness@gov.wales

Yours sincerely,



Nick Wood
Deputy Chief Executive
NHS Wales



Albert Heaney CBE
Chief Social Care Officer for Wales
Welsh Government



Alex Slade
Director of Primary Care, Mental Health and Early Years
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Cc:

Judith Paget, Director General HSCEY / Chief Executive NHS Wales
Chief Executives, Local Authorities
LHB Directors of Public Health
Medical Directors LHBs/NHS Trusts
Heads of Adult Social Services
WLGA
Directors of Nursing LHBs/NHS Trusts
Directors of Planning
Chief Operating Officers LHBs/NHS Trusts
Directors of Primary and Community Care
Sue Tranka, Chief Nursing Officer, Welsh Government
Isabel Oliver, Chief Medical Officer, Welsh Government

Annex 1: Regional grants and funding streams 2025/26

Funding	Total All Wales Amount 2025/26	Status
Allied Health Professional	£4,950,000	Recurring
Dementia Action Plan and Memory Assessment Services	£12,700,000	Recurring
Further Faster	£11,950,000	Recurring
Integrated Rebalancing Care Funding: Revenue to support capital planning	£3,150,000	Ends March 2027
Pathways of Care Delay transformation grant	£30,000,000	Recurring
Regional Integration Fund: Core including Dementia Action Plan (above)	£146,800,000	Ends March 2027
Short Breaks for Unpaid Carers	£1,287,000	Ends March 2026
Urgent Goals	£18,800,000	Recurring