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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board

Strategic Equality Plan *Annual Report* **2024/2025**



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Introduction

Hywel Dda University Health Board (the Health Board) is dedicated to placing people at the core of all our activities. Our vision is to foster an accessible and inclusive organisational culture and environment for everyone. This encompasses our staff, those receiving care, their families and carers, as well as our partners, whether they are statutory organisations, third sector partners, or our communities. We aim to treat everyone as individuals, adopting a person-centred approach that ensures fairness, integrity, dignity, and respect for all, regardless of their background or beliefs.

The Equality Act 2010 mandates fair treatment for everyone. This legislation protects individuals from being treated less favourably due to:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief (including non-belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

To ensure we treat people fairly, we must collect and utilise information about the experiences of our staff and service users. It is crucial that our services meet the needs of all groups and that we maintain fairness in the workplace. Our report includes case study examples, with fictitious names used to protect the identities of those who have shared their stories or feedback.

We employ various methods to gather and compile information about our communities and staff, including:

- Siarad Iechyd/Talking Health: Our involvement and engagement scheme that allows the public to voice their opinions on the planning, development, and delivery of local health services.
- Engagement and consultation: With staff and communities at public events and through surveys.
- Data collection: From our patient administration systems.
- Patient feedback: Including compliments and complaints about their experiences with our services.
- Staff surveys: Data from our electronic staff records and grievance reports.
- Welsh Government initiatives and national reports: Such as those from the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Older People's Commissioner, Stonewall, and others.
- Public Service Board Wellbeing Assessments: For each of the three counties.

We are continually striving to enhance the collection and reporting of equality data for those using our services. This involves adapting our existing systems to gather this data and raising awareness about its importance and how it will be used to improve services and outcomes for patients. The same applies to collecting equality data for our staff, and we are collaborating with the Welsh Government and other NHS Wales Health Boards and Trusts to improve our national information systems.

Our efforts to advance the equality agenda are interconnected with several pieces of legislation, policy drivers, and key reports, including:

- The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 – National Assembly for Wales
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- The Welsh Language Standards (No.8) Regulations 2022 – Welsh Government
- More than just words – Welsh Government
- The Socio-economic Duty – Welsh Government
- The Armed Forces Covenant Duty – UK Government
- Anti-racist Wales Action Plan – Welsh Government
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan – Welsh Government
- Is Wales Fairer? (2023) – Equality and Human Rights Commission

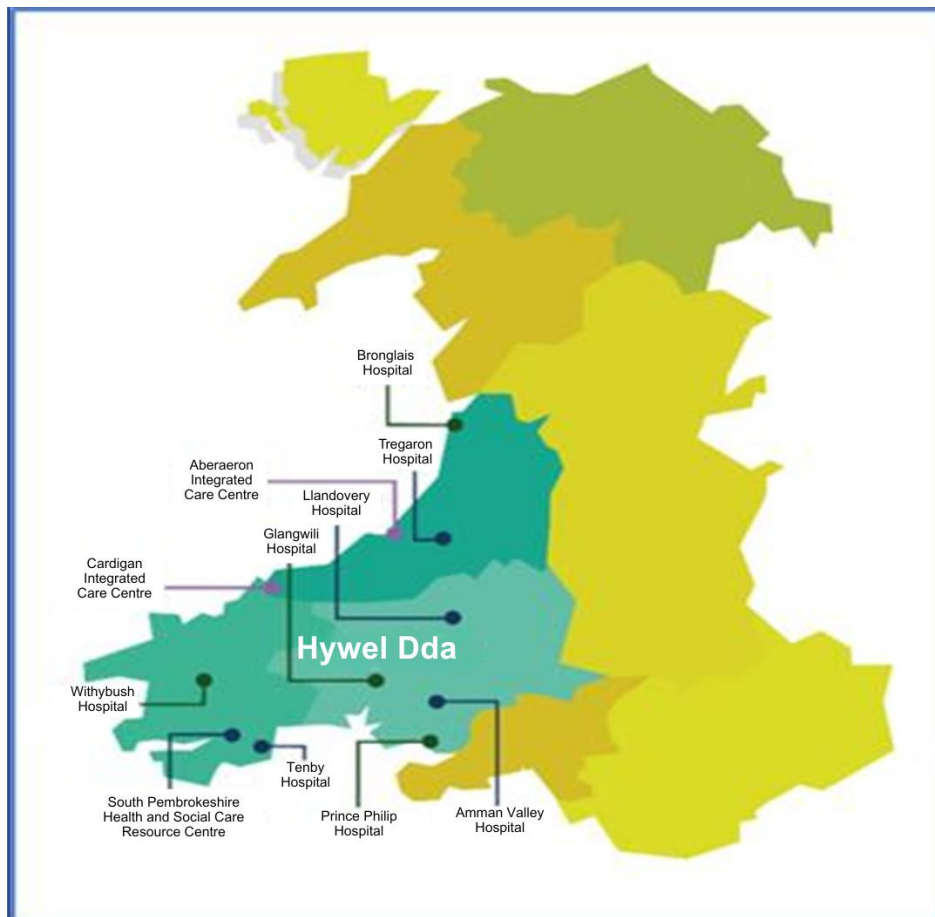
While our annual report provides an overview of the Health Board's efforts to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion, it should be read alongside other key documents listed below, with hyperlinks provided:

- [Hywel Dda University Health Board Annual Report](#)
- [Director of Public Health Annual Report](#)
- [Our 20-year strategy - A Healthier Mid and West Wales: Our Future Generations Living Well](#)
- [Our Well-being of Future Generations Annual Report](#)
- [NHS Charities Together Communities Partnerships Interim Report \(2024\)](#)

About the Hywel Dda area

Hywel Dda University Health Board plans and provides NHS healthcare services for the residents of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and neighbouring counties. Below are some key facts about our Health Board. For more detailed information, please refer to our Health Board Annual Report 2024-2025:

- Our Health Board covers a quarter of the land mass of Wales.
- We employ approximately 13,000 staff members and have a growing number of volunteers and apprentices.
- Based on the 2021 Census, we provide healthcare services to around 383,000 residents, as well as numerous visitors to our area.
- We support 48 general practices, 47 dental practices, 99 community pharmacies, and 44 general ophthalmic practices.
- Our facilities include four main hospitals, seven community hospitals, and eleven health centres.
- We collaborate with our three local authorities and partners from the public, private, and voluntary sectors.



We recognise that many individuals within our diverse populations, including those with protected characteristics, experience socio-economic deprivation. This deprivation is a significant factor contributing to poorer health outcomes, limited access to education and employment opportunities, and the perpetuation of the cycle of deprivation.

Our goal is to break this cycle in alignment with the aspirations of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, striving to create a healthier, more equal Wales with resilient communities working together towards a better future for all.

Information on health and socio-economic factors across the three counties is available from the Public Health Wales Observatory, the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, and Stats Wales. Further details about the characteristics and needs of our population can also be found in the local assessments of wellbeing published by the Public Services Boards in each local authority area.

[Ceredigion Local Well-being Plan - Ceredigion County Council](#)

[Carmarthenshire Local Well-being Assessment – the Carmarthenshire We Want](#)

[Well-being Assessment - Pembrokeshire County Council](#)

Demographic information for the Hywel Dda region is available on the Office for National Statistics website. Historically, our population has experienced temporary changes, with significant increases during the summer months due to the tourism industry and transient student populations throughout the year.

We recognise the importance of continually striving to ensure that our diverse communities have opportunities to communicate their needs, receive appropriate services, and have equal opportunities for employment and career progression.

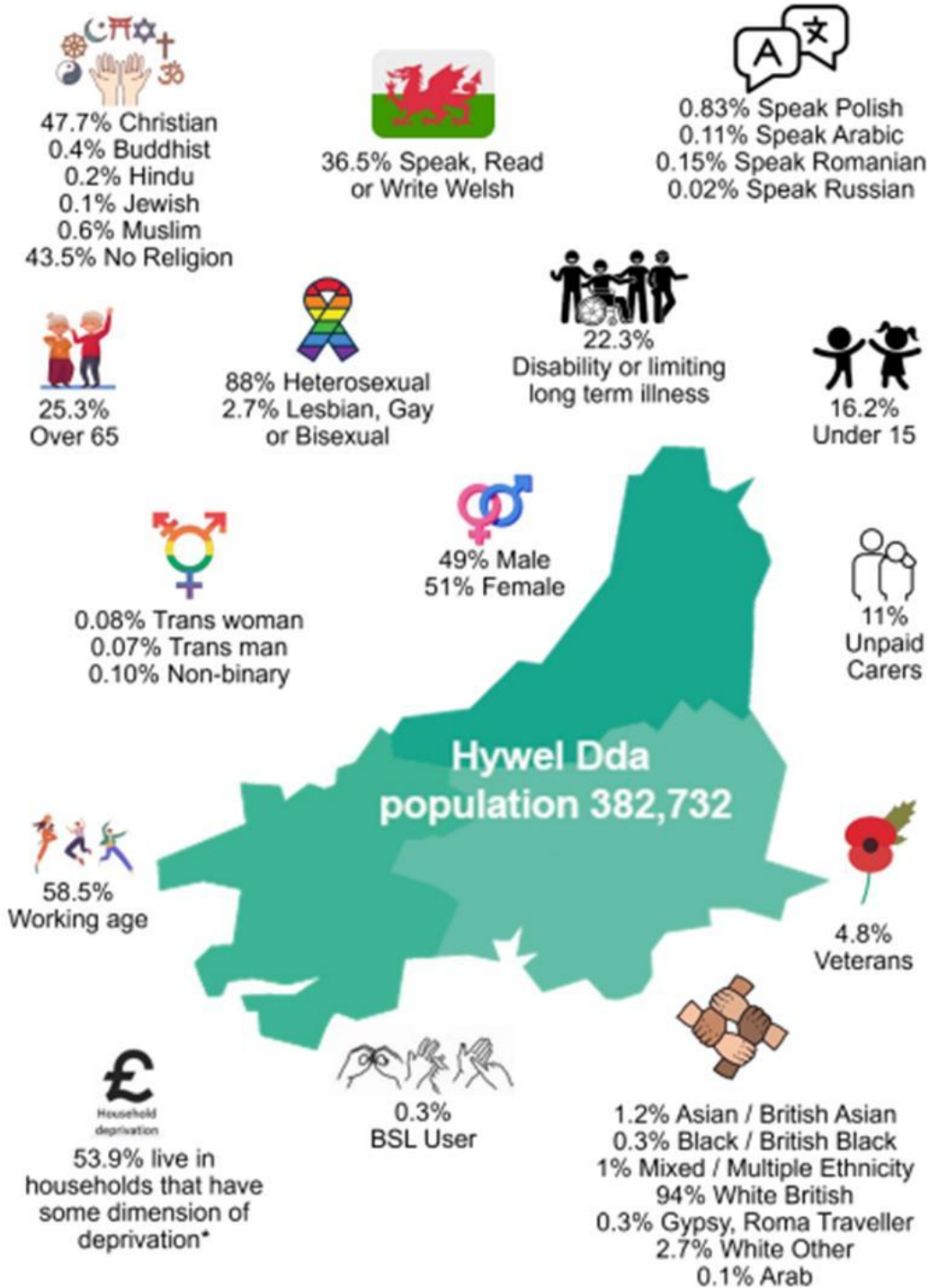
There are high concentrations of Welsh speakers in some areas across the three counties, and we are committed to providing an active offer to patients who wish to receive their services in Welsh. We aim to identify our Welsh-speaking service users and encourage our Welsh-speaking staff to register their language skills on their Electronic Staff Record (ESR). In accordance with the Welsh Language Standards (No.7) 2018 Regulations, we have an action plan in place to meet the requirements of the Standards through our Bilingual Skills Strategy. Further details can be found in our Welsh Language Annual Reports.

Appendix 1 Annual Workforce Equality Report 2024-2025, illustrates “life in Hywel Dda” across the protected groups. This information is extracted from data held on the Electronic Staff Record’s Business Intelligence database. All Health Board employees are encouraged to record and regularly update their personal data on this system to help collect more complete and accurate information about our workforce as a whole.

An overview of the population of Hywel Dda University Health Board can be found on the following page.

Our population

The infographic below provides an illustration of the characteristics of the people living in Hywel Dda and is drawn from the averages of the data for each local authority area.



*The dimensions of deprivation used to classify households are indicators based on four selected household characteristics. - Education, Employment, Health & Housing ([Household deprivation - Census Maps. ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/census)). Data provided by ONS Census 2021 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>

Our strategic equality plan and objectives 2024-2028

We have four overarching strategic equality objectives outlined in our 2024-2028 Strategic Equality Plan.

The strategic equality objectives for 2024-28 are:

- **Objective 1 – Leadership by all**
Staff at all levels, including Board Members, actively promote and facilitate a culture of inclusion and wellbeing across the organisation.
- **Objective 2 – Working Together to improve health and well-being for all**
Our staff will actively work to reduce health inequalities
- **Objective 3 – Embedding a person-centred approach**
Our staff use the Health Board values to deliver a person-centred approach in everything they do.
- **Objective 4 - Being an employer of choice**
We will offer equal opportunities for employment and career progression and support the health and well-being of our staff and volunteers within a fair and inclusive environment.

Our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2024-2028 reaffirms our dedication to advancing equality, eliminating discrimination, and fostering good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This comprehensive plan reflects our dual role as an employer and a service provider, ensuring that our commitments extend to patients, families, carers, and the broader community.

Our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) objectives are closely aligned with the Health Board's Wellbeing Objectives, which are interconnected with the wellbeing goals established by the Well-being of Future Generations (WFG) (Wales) Act 2015. The WFG Act is a cornerstone of our long-term strategy, 'A Healthier Mid and West Wales: Our Future Generations Living Well'.

The Health Board has six strategic objectives that reflect our vision: 'Together we are building kind and healthy places to live and work in Mid and West Wales'. These objectives relate to our people (staff, service users, and communities) and our services:

Together we are building kind and healthy places to live and work in Mid and West Wales.



The examples provided in this annual report illustrate how the Health Board is actively embedding and promoting principles to achieve the best possible health and wellbeing outcomes for everyone.

The Health Board is diligently working to address the worsening health inequalities within our communities. The disproportionate effects on those with protected characteristics and vulnerable individuals continue to be increasingly evident and are being further exacerbated by ongoing socio-economic pressures, political instability, and leadership changes across the UK. Conflict across the World and local tensions also contribute to these disproportionate impacts.

We are committed to mitigating these impacts and improving health outcomes for all, particularly for those most affected by external societal factors beyond their control. Our efforts include targeted initiatives and collaborations with partners and stakeholders to drive continuous improvements for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Examples of our efforts can be found throughout this report.

Spotlight on: Leadership by all

Our Aim

Staff at all levels, including Board members, actively promote and facilitate a culture of inclusion and wellbeing across the organisation.

Anticipated Outcome

- The Health Board recognises and values the needs and differences of all staff and service users.
- Staff, including Board members, will use their lived experiences and act as role models to create positive experiences for colleagues and service users.
- Staff and service users will stand up to racism and all forms of discrimination and are empowered to voice any concerns

Developing our staff

Over the past 12 months, Hywel Dda University Health Board has introduced several initiatives to enhance staff development. These efforts underscore our commitment to fostering a supportive and growth-orientated environment for all employees. Key initiatives include:

- Enhanced learning opportunities: Expanding access to professional development programmes, including workshops, online courses, and seminars.
- Wellbeing support: integrating occupational health services and psychological wellbeing resources to promote mental and physical health.
- Leadership development: Implementing programmes aimed at cultivating leadership skills among staff, preparing future leaders within the organisation.

These initiatives reflect our dedication to continuous improvement and the professional growth of our workforce.

Active bystander

Hywel Dda University Health Board continues to facilitate a rolling programme of Active Bystander training, providing staff with the skills and confidence to call out discrimination and inappropriate behaviour. The provision of Active Bystander training is also recorded as a key action within the Health Boards Anti-Racist Wales Local Action Plan. Over the course of this financial year 6 Active Bystander sessions have been delivered to a total of 151 members of staff.

The Active Bystander sessions are evaluated and feedback from attendees is used to ensure the course is effective and that the learning objectives are being achieved. 73% of attendees highlighted that they would like to attend further training on this subject and 95% indicated that they would recommend the session to others. Here are some examples of the feedback received from the programme:



"A well-structured format excellently delivered - very useful. I would like refresher training if available in the future."



"I really enjoyed the session and thought it very thought provoking. Some of the scenarios were familiar to me. Personally, I was reluctant to put my thoughts/'answers' in the chat when I knew that I could be asked to explain my answer/thought. For me, I'd have been more comfortable to be able to add my comments to the chat and listen to the feedback."



"I just wanted to say the session was fantastic. It was the most engaging online training I've attended, and I think an amazing job was done engaging with participants. Thank you so much!"



"This was certainly a thought-provoking session, and I would encourage my whole team to attend future training opportunities. It was delivered well, thank you."

LEAP (Leadership Engagement with Awesome People)

Leaders at Hywel Dda need to be agile, vibrant, responsive, innovative and diverse. LEAP was created to develop and support leaders to be able to respond and adapt to the challenges both now and in the future.

This innovative and progressive leadership development programme is for senior leaders and focuses on compassionate, collective and inclusive leadership. The programme includes a diversity and inclusion session 'Creating an environment where everyone can flourish and thrive' which is delivered by the Diversity and Inclusion team. This session covers topics such as the benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, equality and diversity law and legislation, discrimination and unconscious bias.

Four cohorts of the LEAP programme have been delivered over the last 12 months to a total of 67 senior leaders within the Health Board.



The Hywel Dda Manager programme

The Hywel Dda Manager programme is designed for supervisors, managers, and those aspiring to these roles. It's designed to empower supervisors and managers, to become more effective, inclusive, resilient, and compassionate focusing on essential day-to-day skills such as effective communication, supportive management, and motivational leadership.



Datblygu timau rheoli tosturiol a chynhwysol

RHEOLWR
HYWEL DDA
MANAGER

Developing compassionate and inclusive management teams

A key component of the programme is the diversity and inclusion session titled 'Being an Inclusive Manager.' Upon completing the Hywel Dda Management Programme, managers will be well-equipped to ensure fair treatment of staff, understand steps to eliminate discrimination and bias, and foster a sense of value and retention within the Health Board.

Over the past 12 months, eight different cohorts, comprising 157 staff members, have embarked on their Hywel Dda Management programme journey. Evaluations from this period indicate that 75% of attendees reported a significant increase in their knowledge about being an Inclusive Manager as a result of the 'Inclusive Manager' session.

Talent Management and Succession Planning

Over the past 12 months, Hywel Dda University Health Board has focused on enhancing Talent Management and Succession Planning. We have done this through:

- **Structured Talent Management Programmes:** The Health Board has implemented comprehensive talent management programmes to identify and nurture high-potential employees. These programmes include targeted training, mentorship, and career development opportunities.
- **Succession Planning Framework:** A robust succession planning framework has been established to ensure continuity in leadership and critical roles. This framework involves identifying key positions, assessing potential successors, and providing tailored development plans to prepare them for future roles.
- **Performance Reviews and Development Plans:** Regular performance reviews are conducted to evaluate employee progress and identify areas for improvement. These reviews are complemented by personalised development plans to support career growth and readiness for higher responsibilities.
- **Leadership Pipeline Development:** Efforts have been made to create a strong leadership pipeline by investing in leadership development programmes and workshops. This ensures that the Health Board has a pool of well-prepared leaders ready to step into key roles as needed.

The Coach Approach: During this reporting period, Hywel Dda University Health Board has continued to develop and implement the "Coach Approach" to support staff development and enhance workplace culture. The Coach approach consists of:

- **Training and Development:** The Health Board has provided extensive training for managers and leaders to adopt coaching techniques in their daily interactions with staff. This includes formal training sessions and ongoing support to ensure the effective application of these skills.
- **Enhanced Communication:** By fostering a coaching culture, the Health Board aims to improve communication across all levels of the organisation. This approach encourages open dialogue, active listening, and constructive feedback
- **Employee Empowerment:** The Coach Approach focuses on empowering employees to take ownership of their development and career progression. This involves setting personal goals, identifying areas for improvement, and creating actionable plans to achieve these goals.
- **Supportive Environment:** Creating a supportive and collaborative work environment is a key objective. The Health Board has implemented regular check-ins and mentoring sessions to provide continuous support and guidance to staff.

Making a Difference programme

The "Making a Difference" Customer Service programme is designed to foster positive interactions with Hywel Dda customers, including our patients, families, and visitors. This programme emphasises effective communication, provides tools to manage conflict and incivility, and reinforces the Hywel Dda Values and Behaviours framework.



The goal of the Making a Difference Programme is to equip staff with the tools and skills necessary to provide excellent customer service. By the end of the programme, staff are expected to:

- Create positive interactions with Hywel Dda customers, our patients, families, and visitors
- Demonstrate the use of tools provided to manage conflict and establish positive working relationships
- Identify various support mechanisms to promote health, wellbeing, and empower individuals to fulfil their potential

During 2024, 27 Making a Difference sessions have been delivered to 354 staff members. Since the programme's inception, a total of 1,518 staff members have completed the training across the Health Board. Course evaluations revealed that 100% of participants would recommend the Making a Difference programme to their colleagues.

Leading with Cultural Intelligence training

The Health Board's Organisational Development Relationship Manager service, in collaboration with the Learning and Development team, has developed and delivered training to enhance the cultural intelligence skills of our managers and leaders. These sessions delve into how our cultural preferences shape our behaviour, attitudes, and the

ways we lead, interact, and engage with others. Ongoing support is provided by the OD Relationship Manager service, with continuous training made available by Learning & Development.

By the end of this workshop managers will have developed their understanding of what cultural intelligence is. Through the tools introduced, managers will be able to lead and engage more effectively, empathetically, and inclusively with teams and patients who are from diverse cultural backgrounds. Over the past 12 months, five "Leading with Cultural Intelligence" training sessions/workshops have been delivered to a total of 71 staff members across the Health Board.

Autism Awareness training

Hywel Dda University Health Board has made significant progress in Autism Awareness training. During this reporting period Hywel Dda University Health Board became the first Health Board in Wales to achieve 'Autism Understanding' status. This accreditation, awarded by the National Neuro-Divergence Team, recognises the Health Board's commitment to increasing autism awareness and understanding. To achieve this status, 85% of Hywel Dda's 13,000 staff completed e-learning modules focused on autism awareness. This training aims to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to better support neuro-divergent individuals.

In addition, the Health Board has developed a comprehensive strategy to increase awareness and understanding of autism and other neuro-divergent conditions. This includes partnership working with the National Neuro-Divergence Team to deliver webinars and bespoke training packages.

The training and initiatives are designed to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for both staff and patients. This includes making reasonable adjustments in the workplace to better support neuro-divergent employees.



Anti Racism Wales Action Plan

Anti-racism training

Throughout the year, the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team facilitated training to enhance awareness and inclusion in the workplace and in the delivery of services. Our sessions aimed to deepen understanding of minority ethnic communities, religious diversity, and the importance of anti-racism in professional practice.

Working with Minority Ethnic Children, Young People and Families

This training provided insights into cultural diversity, discrimination, and best practice for supporting minority ethnic communities. Participants explored the barriers to accessing services, the significance of inclusive support, and the value of partnership working.

Religion and Belief

This session addressed challenges faced by religious individuals in the workplace, fostering inclusivity and allyship. Key topics included the distinction between religion,

culture, and identity, workplace discrimination, and the creation of safe and inclusive environments.

Anti-Racism for Practitioners

This programme focused on anti-racism in Wales, equipping professionals with the knowledge to support minority ethnic individuals effectively. Topics included the racially diverse population of Wales, the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the impact of racism in work settings, and cultural considerations in mental health. The training empowered staff to foster inclusivity, recognise discrimination, and take meaningful action.

In addition to these training modules an all-Wales e-learning module on anti-racism was launched by Welsh Government during this reporting period and has been made mandatory for all staff to complete. As of the end of March 2025 64.9% of Health Board staff had completed the anti-racism module.

Aspiring Board Members Programme

As part of the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, Welsh Government committed to the development of an Aspiring Board members programme. The first cohort joined the programme in May 2025. It is recognised that Boards need to be representative of their workforce and diversity of membership draws on wider lived experiences and provides a greater understanding of under-represented groups. The aim of the programme is to create a robust pipeline of diverse applicants but, as well as non-executive Director positions, the programme is intended to help individuals recognise the wider opportunities that exist within Health.

Board Seminar and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Progress

In December 2024, a Board seminar was held to address systemic inequalities and discrimination. Discussions highlighted key themes from the annual SEP report and the role of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in Board deliberations. Board members were encouraged to reflect on their individual and collective responsibilities in driving change.

The session presented uncompromising data on gender, discrimination, race, and disability, supplemented by lived experiences. Board members engaged in discussions on shaping the organisation's future, addressing key challenges, and setting priorities.

The seminar prompted difficult but necessary conversations, reinforcing the urgency of addressing critical issues to foster growth. As a result, an EDI Task Force has been established to lead this work, supported by the Board and reporting to the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee (PODCC). With support from the Health Board's Quality Improvement team, the Task Force will adopt a quality improvement approach, to achieve system-wide change.

Spotlight on: Working together to improve health and well-being for all

Our Aim

Our staff will actively work to reduce health inequalities.

Anticipated Outcome

- We will continue to listen to our population, especially those who traditionally find it difficult to access services and often have poorer health outcomes. We will use their feedback and experience to help us when we are planning and providing services.
- The Health Board will work with partners, such as other organisations, Third Sector and communities to reduce health inequalities and remove barriers to accessing health and care services.

Supporting our diverse populations

The Community Development Outreach Team (CDOT) continues to actively engage with our diverse populations, gathering insights into their needs and providing essential information, advice, and support to facilitate access to healthcare services. The CDOT team undertakes the following activities:

Healthcare Empowerment:

They empower individuals to access healthcare services and promote vaccine uptake.

Community Events:

In partnership, they plan and attend community events to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

Interpretation Services:

They support health staff in using interpretation services to ensure patients have access to interpreters when needed, enhancing patient and clinician experiences.

Community Engagement:

They meet and converse with community members, encouraging participation in public engagement events.

Public Health Messaging:

They disseminate crucial public health information.

Agency Connections:

They connect people with other agencies and third-sector organisations.

Over the past year, the CDOT has strengthened its partnership with third sector organisations and the local authorities. They have organised and delivered well-being events across our three counties and over the past 12 months these events have been particularly vital as a larger number of individuals and households have experienced greater impacts because of the cost-of-living crisis.

Working with our Gypsy Roma Traveller Communities

The Hywel Dda area is home to a significant Gypsy and Traveller population. Members of the Community Development Outreach Team (CDOT) make regular visits to sites, fostering relationships with residents and promoting key healthcare messages. Their ongoing presence helps individuals overcome barriers, such as difficulties in reading or understanding correspondence and confusion around appointments, ensuring better access to essential health services.

Summary: Gypsy Roma Traveller Arts Tackling Health Inequality through the Arts

Led by Hywel Dda's Arts and Health and Community Outreach Teams, in partnership with Carmarthenshire County Council and arts partners People Speak Up and Arts4Wellbeing, this project aimed to promote wellbeing, encourage healthy behaviours and foster trust.

Gypsy and Traveller communities face significant social challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and housing insecurity, which contribute to chronic ill health and reduced life expectancy. Limited literacy and distrust of health services further hinder access to vital healthcare information.

The initiative involved six weeks of weekly art workshops at two Gypsy and Traveller sites, incorporating mural painting and creative activities. Healthcare staff participated, using the informal setting to deliver health messages on smoking cessation, healthy eating, and mental wellbeing. This approach helped reduce stigma and encouraged informed health choices.

A thematic analysis of interviews with community members and outreach workers identified five key impacts: increased confidence, stronger friendships, lasting change, improved trust, and empowerment through participation. Meaningful engagement and cultural sensitivity played a crucial role in encouraging ongoing interaction with healthcare services.

The project's legacy includes displaying artwork and findings at Hywel Dda's headquarters. It highlighted the arts' potential to address systemic health inequalities and will continue to inspire community-driven change.

Full report available: [Gypsy Roma Traveller Arts Tackling health inequality through the arts | Wales Arts Health & Well-being Network](#)

Supporting asylum seekers and refugees

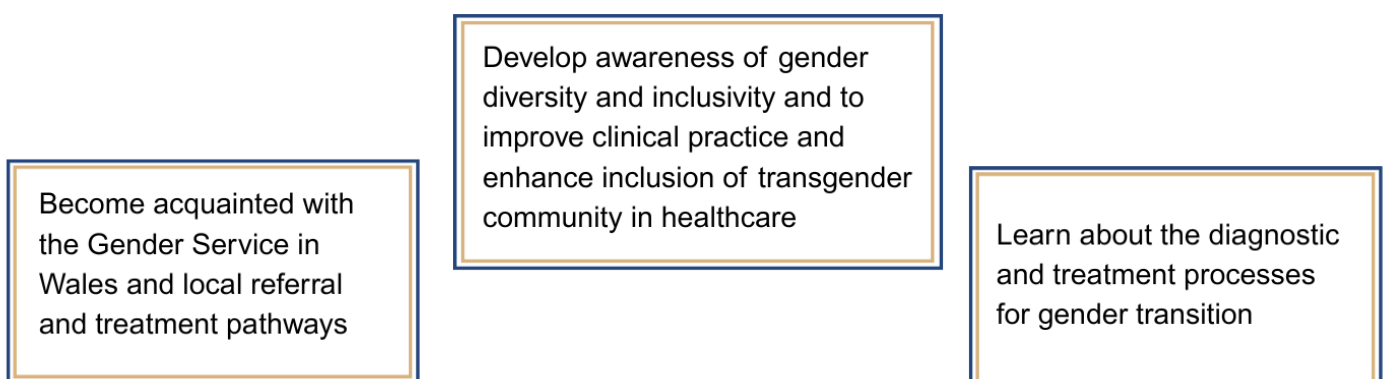
The Health Board actively supports refugees and asylum seekers through various local partnerships. Over the last 12 months the CDOT have been instrumental in providing information in different languages ensuring clarity on how to access healthcare services. The CDOT deliver health messages through ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, on navigating and understanding NHS Wales with particular emphasis on using the NHS emergency 999 service and the Wales 111 healthcare advice service. The CDOT also work in partnership with local authority and third sector organisations to refer individuals to wellbeing support services, liaise with Public Health Midwives to ensure patients receive pregnancy information and support, and collaborate with the Community Immunisation team to provide information about the vaccine and immunisation schedules.

Supporting our Gender Diverse Communities

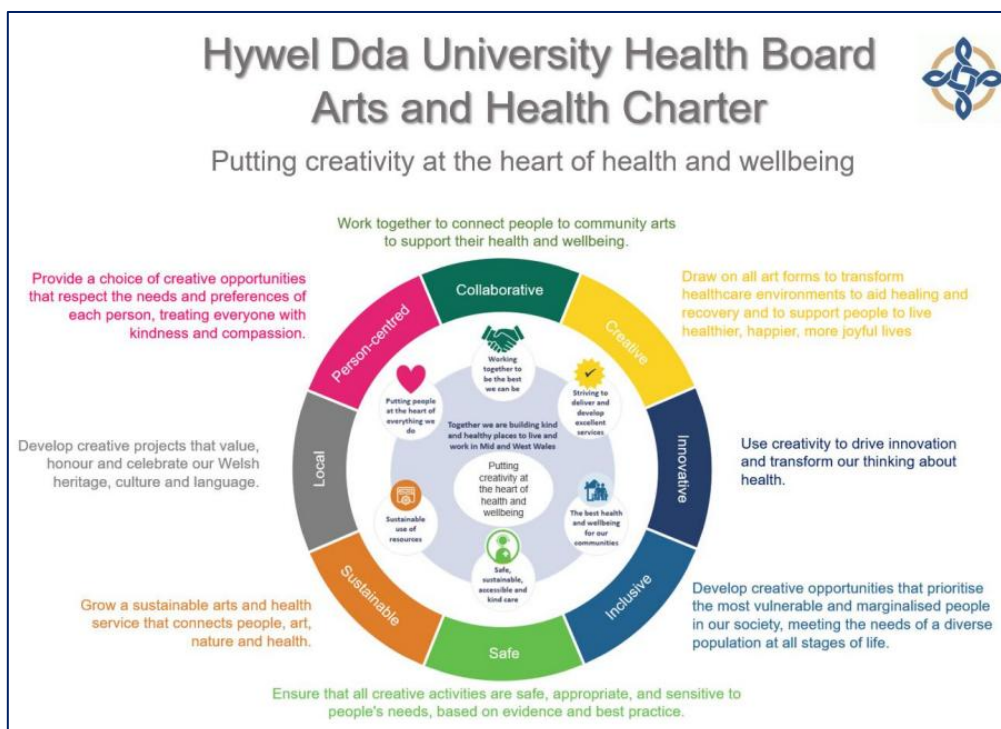
To better support our staff in supporting patients and colleagues who are gender diverse, the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team have facilitated several training sessions. During the past 12 months the team arranged the delivery of two Stonewall sessions, one of which covered LGBTQ+ terminology and the second covered Trans awareness. Due to the demand for spaces on these sessions a further two 'Trans awareness' sessions were delivered by the Health Board's Gender Nurse Specialist. These sessions were able to be more specific to the role health care providers have and aimed to provide a better understanding of the Trans community and how we can support Trans individuals when accessing health care.

The Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team also created specific learning resources to complement this training, including an 'Understanding LGBTQ+ Inclusive language' resource and 'LGBTQ+ terms' poster, which have been promoted across the Health Board.

Hywel Dda University Health Board's Arts and Health Charter



The Hywel Dda University Health Board's Arts and Health Charter is a pioneering initiative integrating the arts into healthcare to enhance patient experiences, promote healing, and support wellbeing. As the first of its kind in Wales, it was co-created through extensive engagement with staff, patients, the public, and arts professionals. The Charter recognises creativity as a vital tool in illness prevention, wellbeing improvement, and recovery support. It establishes principles to embed the arts into healthcare services, particularly benefiting vulnerable populations such as older adults, individuals with dementia, and those facing mental health challenges. Current applications include live music to comfort patients, dance for falls prevention, singing to improve lung health, and visual arts to support mental health. The Charter also contributes to the social prescribing agenda, empowering individuals to take control of their health and wellbeing.



Below is a taste of what was offered as part of the Arts and Health Charter in 2024-25.

Creative Prescribing Discovery Programme

Initially launched in 2022, Hywel Dda University Health Board's Creative Prescribing Discovery Programme integrates the arts into healthcare through social prescribing. Developed in collaboration with Public Health Wales, Health Education Improvement Wales, and arts organisations, the initiative aims to reduce health inequalities across Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, and Ceredigion.

Key activities included establishing wellbeing programmes for social prescribers and patients, developing training for healthcare professionals, creating an Arts in Health Network, running Creative Prescribing Cafes, and launching an Artist in Residence programme.

An independent evaluation demonstrated the programme's impact:

- 866 participants engaged, including patients, healthcare staff, and community members
- 126 professionals joined discussions through Creative Prescribing Cafes
- 195 individuals took part in Artist in Residence workshops across 108 sessions

The initiative has shown significant benefits in improving mental health, fostering social connections, and enhancing overall wellbeing, reinforcing the therapeutic power of creativity in healthcare.

Artists In Residence (AIR)

The Arts and Health project steering group collaborated to create an Artist in Residence programme at Hywel Dda, where arts partners joined health care teams in each county. They worked with a team and/or a priority beneficiary group that had a protected characteristic and matched the county's needs and priorities. A series of 4 artist in residencies were held, based on a model of 1 per county to design and develop a pilot project that was designed to meet the needs of 3 different protected characteristic groups.

DanceWell Project – Carmarthenshire

The DanceWell project in Carmarthenshire provided dance-for-health prescriptions for patients in the Tywi and Taf GP cluster who had chronic conditions or mobility issues.

The project aimed to develop links between community Multi-Disciplinary Teams, specialist nurses, and GP surgeries to facilitate arts-on-prescription initiatives. It also sought to collaborate with local arts partners to deliver a high-quality programme and improve patient access to arts-based health interventions and physical activity.

For patients attending the DanceWell sessions, the goals included improving health and wellbeing, increasing physical activity, reducing social isolation, and enhancing mental health. Over the pilot period, 168 patients participated in 96 sessions, with a total of 734 individual attendances across various locations.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting significant benefits for both physical and mental health. All respondents expressed a willingness to continue with the programme if it remained available.

Spotlight on: Embedding a person-centred approach

Our Objective

Our staff use the Health Board values to deliver a person-centred approach in everything they do.

Anticipated Outcome

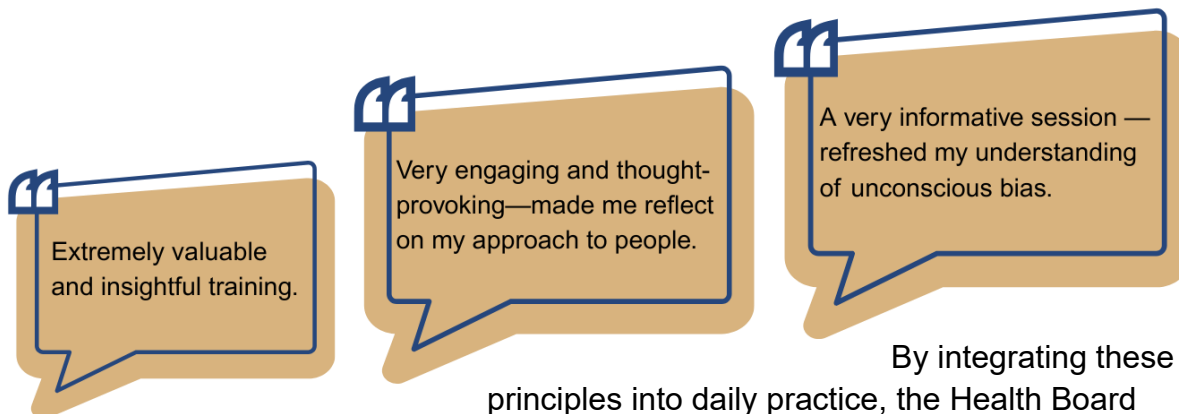
- Staff will have access to training and development opportunities to enhance their knowledge of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Staff will have an awareness and understanding of the individual needs of our service users and diverse population and strive to meet those needs.
- We will actively engage with and listen to the diverse population that we serve, and ensure their needs are at the centre of all that we do.

Person Centred Approach training

The Health Board remains committed to fostering an inclusive workplace, ensuring fairness, dignity, and respect for all. The Person-Centred Approach training programme provides staff with an overview of equality and human rights legislation and equitable treatment for protected groups, carers, and vulnerable individuals.

The course explores unconscious bias and stereotypes, highlighting their impact on interactions and care delivery. It also introduces the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion Team, who offer ongoing support. Embedded in staff induction, the programme sets clear expectations on inclusivity and signposts further training.

During the reporting period, 12 sessions were delivered, with 176 staff members completing the programme. Additionally, tailored sessions supported 102 internationally educated nurses. Regular evaluations ensure continuous improvement, with 95% of attendees applying their learning daily. Feedback from participants includes:



By integrating these principles into daily practice, the Health Board continues to promote equitable, person-centred care, supporting a workforce that embraces diversity and inclusivity in all aspects of service delivery.

The Health Board has continued to build upon the progress made in meeting the All-Wales Standards for Accessible Communication and Information for People with Sensory Loss. These standards outline the priorities for health boards to ensure that services for people with sensory loss are accessible.

The Standards require all patient areas to assess and address the needs of people with sensory loss. To support this, the Sensory Loss Friendly Assessment (SLFA) checklist was developed through the Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice (EQIIP) programme in 2022-23. Tested in Audiology and Outpatients in 2024, it helped benchmark accessibility across communication, patient environment, and service delivery, leading to improvements where needed. To expand this work, a dedicated project team was formed in 2024 and successfully secured a place on the Bevan Commission Exemplar programme, further enhancing visibility and support.

The Bevan Commission Exemplar Programme 2024-25

The programme provides independent advice to government and NHS leaders, with a dedicated project team advancing the SLFA Checklist through networking, leadership, and innovation training. The Health Board's Bevan Exemplar project, 'Meeting the Communication and Information Needs of People with Sensory Loss', supports the All-Wales Standards for Accessible Communication. It aims to enhance patient experience, boost staff confidence in accessibility, and ensure equitable healthcare.

Piloted across multiple service areas, the SLFA Checklist is continuously refined in collaboration with key partners, including Llais and Wales Council of the Blind. Beyond sensory loss, the project addresses wider communication needs, such as disabilities and language barriers, ensuring compliance with the Equality Act (2010) to prevent discrimination.

Staff Sensory Loss training

As part of the EQIIP programme, the Sensory Loss Project Team reviewed staff completion rates for the NHS Wales Sensory Loss e-learning module. Over the past year, the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team has actively promoted the module through awareness-raising training sessions. Staff engagement continues to grow, with 320 Health Board employees having completed the module. This upward trend is expected to continue as the SLFA checklist expands to more service areas.

WPAS Sensory Loss Marker

The Patient Administration System for Wales (WPAS) features a sensory loss marker to highlight patients' communication needs. To promote its use, the Health Board developed a WPAS Recording of Sensory Loss staff guide, widely shared across the organisation and partnership forums. Through training and awareness initiatives, staff have actively collected and recorded patient communication preferences, leading to a significant increase in recording patients who have a sensory loss. As of 15th March 2025, 222 patients were recorded on WPAS, reflecting a 164% rise in the past six months and a 1750% increase since April 2024.

Success story

During this reporting period the Outpatients Team were successful in the NHS Wales Awards under the category of Equitable Care. It is recognition of their incredible quality improvement work, transforming the experience and outcomes for people with sensory loss in Hywel Dda.



BSL Lunch Club

The BSL Lunch Club meets monthly, helping staff build confidence in British Sign Language. During this reporting period, members learned to sign common phrases, including introductions, weather, numbers, directions, and basic healthcare conversations. To showcase their progress, the club performed a signed Christmas carol at the Health Board's carol service. By March 2025, membership had grown to 94, with a dedicated MS Teams channel for support and resource sharing.

Have you signed up yet?

Virtual BSL Lunch Club for Staff

📍 **Where:** Microsoft Teams

📅 **When:** Wednesday 25th September, 12:00 - 12:30

To receive an invite and resources, please contact us at inclusion.HDD@wales.nhs.uk



It's great to see health professionals and hospital staff engaging with a language which is challenging to learn, but bring a significant benefit to Hywel Dda patients.

BSL Club Member

Digital Inclusion

Hywel Dda University Health Board recognises digital healthcare as a vital component of service delivery, encompassing video appointments, online support, healthcare apps, and digital communication. To ensure accessibility, the Health Board is committed to a digital inclusion programme focused on improving digital skills, recognising digital access as a social determinant of health, co-designing digital services, and enhancing health literacy.

The Digital Inclusion Team provides staff support, while the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team participates in the Regional Digital Inclusion Steering Group to help ensure accessibility for those with protected characteristics and our most vulnerable communities.

During this reporting period, key initiatives included expanding the Digital Inclusion Champions Network, enhancing digital skills among staff and the community, addressing the digital divide, collaborating across sectors, and maintaining a strong commitment to Digital Inclusion in partnership with Digital Communities Wales. These efforts reinforce the Health Board's dedication to reducing digital inequalities and ensuring all community members benefit from advancements in healthcare.

Staff Psychological and Wellbeing Support

The Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service plays a central role in supporting and promoting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of all our staff. A stepped care model ensures that work continues to support cultural and systemic change; to equip leaders, managers and staff with the skills, knowledge and resources needed for good mental health at work; as well as to provide appropriate therapeutic interventions and referral pathways for teams and staff who are struggling.

The Staff Health and Wellbeing Gateway was launched online in May 2023, bringing the full range of staff support services together into one place making it easier for staff to know what is available and how to access it when needed. There have been just under 12,000 views since publication. Printed promotional material with QR codes that would enable staff to access the Gateway with their own devices without needing to be on the Hywel Dda system remains in development.

The service offers regular webinars, attendance at wellbeing days, celebration of national mental health days (including Mental Health Awareness week and World Mental Health Day) and input into a range of programmes across different professional groups to support emotional literacy, mental health awareness and strategies for staying well. Recordings of webinars are available to provide easy access, and each one is evaluated to capture feedback and identify potential improvements.



Staff have access to a range of one-to-one therapeutic support services both internal and external, and these are regularly promoted. Clinical outcomes on the effectiveness of the psychological interventions demonstrate clinically significant improvements in mental health. In addition to this, Qualitative feedback from staff on this aspect of our service remains very positive and demonstrates how staff are helped to remain in work and to return successfully after being on sick leave. The Recovery in Nature Programme has continued with evaluation demonstrating clinically significant improvements in mental health along with a reduction in symptoms of burnout. A new layer of participatory qualitative evaluation has been added (the Most Significant Change Approach) with themes of personal transformation through reconnection with self, others and nature.



I thoroughly enjoyed and found great understanding and techniques to reflect on my burnout experience last year and ways to look to prevent this occurring again and manage my workload, including the associated stress and anxiety that comes from my demanding role. I had not taken part in anything like this previously and wasn't sure how I would feel about the reflective nature of the process, but I felt quickly at ease and encouraged to try out these new experiences in a safe place.

The service has its own dedicated SharePoint site, which is regularly updated, providing a wide range of quality assured resources to support staff mental health.

There are specific resources to support managers and leaders in creating the conditions for good wellbeing at work, and new pages are introduced as needs are identified. A resource page on Menopause was published late 2024 and resources specific to Men's mental health are in development.

Improving the health of veterans

The Health Board serves approximately 382,800 people in West Wales, and the 2021 census recorded that 15,637 (4.08%) had served in the UK Armed Forces. Currently, the Health Board employs 131 staff members who have declared their armed forces status.

Armed Forces Covenant Health Action Plan (2024–2026)

Hywel Dda University Health Board has implemented the Armed Forces Covenant Health Action Plan, setting priorities until 2026. Coordinated by the Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion team and Armed Forces champions, the plan focuses on understanding veterans' healthcare needs, reducing disadvantage, providing support through events and training, and positioning the Health Board as an employer of choice for the Armed Forces community.

To benchmark best practice and drive continuous improvement, the Health Board actively participates in accreditation schemes, including:

- Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) – Recognised as a Veteran Aware organisation.
- Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) Gold – Accredited, with re-validation due in 2026.
- HEIW Veteran-Friendly Practices Scheme – Specialist GP training, with four practices completing accreditation during 2024–25.
- Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS) – Demonstrating commitment to LGBT+ veterans and their families.

This approach reinforces the Health Board’s commitment to supporting and improving healthcare services for veterans and the Armed Forces community.

Quality Improvement Project to Identify Veterans

Through the Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice (EQliP) programme, the Health Board has strengthened veteran identification and support mechanisms. Initially launched in 2023, but running throughout 2024 the EQliP project has led to:

- Increased veteran self-identification among patients
- Creation of the WPAS Recording of Armed Forces Keynote: A Staff Guide
- Enhanced Waiting List Support Service actions via updated Call Handler scripts
- Development of a Patients’ Journey Map for staff
- Identification of system changes for simplified veteran identification within the All-Wales WPAS

This project has significantly contributed to the improved identification and management of veterans within the Health Board, ensuring they receive the care and support they deserve.

Success story - Staff Recognition

A member of the Armed Forces Staff Network received a bronze award in the Leadership category at the 2024 Welsh Veterans Awards. This accolade was in recognition of his outstanding leadership during a critical hospital incident, where he demonstrated his military work ethic and values, significantly contributing to his team's success. Throughout his tenure at Hywel Dda University Health Board, he has actively encouraged and supported ex-military colleagues to participate in Health Board initiatives, promoting the organisation as an employer of choice for veterans and the Armed Forces community. This leadership award underscores the importance and value of the transferable skills that military veterans bring to civilian roles.

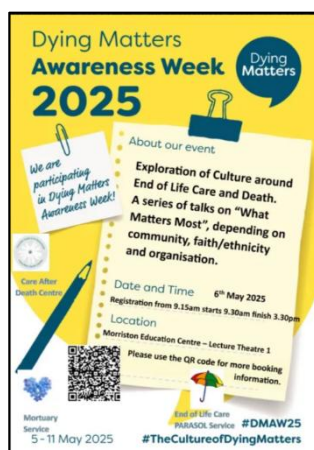


Supporting our Faith Groups - Enhancing Holistic Care and Organisational Support

Over the past year, the Chaplaincy service has provided holistic, person-centred support to patients and healthcare professionals, ensuring inclusivity for individuals of all faiths and beliefs, including non-religious groups.

The Chaplaincy team advises on faith-based healthcare needs, facilitates reflective spaces, and supports religious observances such as Ramadan, Lent, Diwali, and Christmas. It also leads commemorative events, including Remembrance Day and, in 2025, the five-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic, while responding to global and local challenges affecting staff and patients. At the end of life, the Chaplaincy team collaborates with funeral directors and registrars to ease legal and practical processes, reducing pressure on hospital services while respecting family wishes. Working within a multidisciplinary framework, it provides guidance on spiritual, cultural, and social aspects to complement NHS medical care.

As beliefs continue to diversify, the Chaplaincy team remains committed to adapting and ensuring equitable access to high-quality spiritual care, reinforcing its role in positive health outcomes.



Supporting unpaid carers

Hywel Dda University Health Board collaborates with statutory and third-sector organisations through the West Wales Regional Partnership Board (RPB). The RPB's Carers Strategy, published in November 2020, outlines four regional priorities to improve outcomes for unpaid carers:

- Enhancing early identification, including Young Carers and Young Adult Carers
- Providing a range of services to support carers' wellbeing
- Helping carers access education, training, and employment
- Supporting carers to develop digital confidence and inclusion.

Investors in Carers (IiC) Scheme

Led by the Health Board, the Investors in Carers (IiC) scheme supports unpaid carers of all ages, focusing on early identification, staff training, a Carers Champions Network, and legislative compliance. Key achievements include identifying and supporting 666 carers over the past year, integrating early identification of unpaid carers into quality improvement work within Mental Health and Learning Disabilities services, delivering training sessions to Health Board staff and arranging events for Carers Week 2024.

Recent Investors in Carers successes within the Health Board

During this reporting period both the Health Board's Community Children Nurses Service, Ty Bryngwyn Hospice (Palliative Care), Bereavement Counselling services and the Business Partnerships and Inclusion Team as well as 2 GP surgeries have achieved the bronze award in the Investors in Carers scheme.



Bespoke training

Between April 2024 and March 2025, the Carers Team delivered 8 sessions for line managers as part of the continual awareness raising work. One manager who attended said:



Working Carer Registration

The Electronic Staff Record (ESR) system enables staff to record supplementary roles, such as being a Working Carer. Promotion of this facility, alongside the Carers online information resources, is embedded in various training programmes, including corporate induction, manager sessions, and staff checklists. As of 31st March 2025, 274 staff members had used the ESR system to tell us they are a carer, an increase by 113 or 70.19% since the last reporting year.

Carer Aware e-learning

Since May 2023, the Carer Aware e-learning course has been mandatory for all staff, recognising the vital role of unpaid carers in the health and care system. As of 31st March 2025, 88% of staff have completed the training. This e-learning provides essential foundational knowledge, ensuring staff understand the significance of unpaid carers within the community, many of whom support individuals living with one or more protected characteristics. By highlighting the relevance of these characteristics in the lives of care receivers, the training enables staff to tailor support more effectively and respond to diverse needs with empathy and fairness.

Case Study: Supporting an unpaid carer and an employee

A long-serving Health Board employee became a full-time unpaid carer when their mother's health declined. After her multiple strokes in 2020, they managed all aspects of her care while maintaining their job, supported by the Carers Peer Support Group and a flexible manager. Sadly, their mother passed away, but as a result of the organisation's support, which allowed them to balance caregiving and career, ensuring their mother remained at home as she wished, the employee has remained in employment.

Spotlight on: Being an employer of choice

Our Objective

We will offer equal opportunities for employment and career progression and support the health and well-being of our staff and volunteers within a fair and inclusive environment.

Anticipated Outcome

- Staff and volunteers are encouraged to develop and progress in their roles and are supported in their health and well-being.
- Any inequalities, unfair practice and bullying and harassment are identified and addressed promptly.
- The Health Board's commitment to being an inclusive employer is visible, and staff are able to be their true selves at work.

Future Workforce Initiatives

The Health Board remains committed to engaging with young people, reaching 8,567 pupils this year, including 2,855 through the medium of Welsh. 22 out of 26 schools in the Hywel Dda region have now achieved Valued Partner School Status, strengthening collaboration in education. Partnerships with colleges have expanded the Health for the Future and Destination NHS programmes, enabling 1,527 students to access work experience and masterclasses, while 337 individuals completed work experience placements and 36 participated in virtual taster sessions.

The Medical Education Team continues to support aspiring doctors, with 67 students enrolling in the 'Becoming a Doctor' 2025 programme. This initiative provides access to clinical skills training, simulation workshops, and placements, enhancing realism and immersion in medical training. To enhance the candidate experience, simulation scenarios have been incorporated into the school and college offering, increasing realism and providing more immersive opportunities. Encouragingly, post-engagement feedback showed interest in a Health Board career rising from 35% to 63%.

Through the Pathway 4 programme, we have continued to expand access and create meaningful opportunities for individuals requiring additional support. Recognising the diverse nature of Additional Learning Needs, we provide a tailored and structured approach to support each participant effectively. This year, 19 students across the three counties have gained invaluable work experience, equipping them with essential skills for their future endeavours. This initiative has led to tangible outcomes, with one Pathway 4 learner securing employment within the health board and three others joining the volunteering network.

The Health Board now engages with 100% of secondary schools across the three counties, as well as the three main colleges, ensuring inclusive outreach through Pupil Referral Units and community partnerships.

Collaboration with third sector partners has been instrumental in supporting employability and educational initiatives. The Pathway 4 model, which fosters access to work experience for individuals requiring additional support, is now successfully implemented across all three counties, marking a significant achievement in our commitment to inclusive workforce development.

Collaborative partnerships have also facilitated employability sessions at job centres, engaging 257 individuals who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET). Further outreach through wider community events has successfully engaged 1,425 members of the public, contributing to the diversity of the 210 active volunteers within the Health Board. In recognition of the Health Board's commitment to supporting young adults, it was honoured to receive the prestigious Careers Wales Outstanding Achievement Award.

The Future Workforce team is expanding volunteering opportunities by working alongside Trade Union representatives and the Governance Group to assess interest and feasibility for new roles. Combined with broader recruitment strategies, these efforts have fostered a diverse and engaged volunteer community, contributing over 10,000 hours of meaningful activity in 2024–2025. Volunteers range in age, with 42% between 16–24 years old and 25% aged 65 and above. The group is also varied in background, with 20% in employment, 40% in education, 29% retired, and 11% classified as NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Additionally, 14% of volunteers have disclosed a disability, highlighting the inclusive and accessible nature of the programme.



Apprenticeship pathways

The Apprenticeship Academy has continued to thrive, welcoming 42 new apprentices into its programmes, including the Healthcare Apprenticeship Programme and opportunities within the Finance team. This brings the current staff community to a total of 162 apprentices.

The Academy's commitment to collaboration was recognised with the Health Board's Chairs Award for its partnership with Iechyd Dda in supporting young apprentices.

In addition, a healthcare apprentice from Glangwili Hospital was selected as a Welsh Language Ambassador by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. In her role as a Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol Apprenticeship Ambassador, she promotes the Welsh Language within her

apprenticeship by creating content for Coleg Cymraeg’s social media platforms, emphasising the importance of the Welsh Language in patient care.

Recruiting and Supporting our International Educated Nurses

Since May 2022, Hywel Dda University Health Board has been actively delivering its International Registered Nurse Recruitment Programme, designed to attract and integrate internationally trained nurses into the healthcare workforce. This initiative forms part of a centrally coordinated recruitment effort in collaboration with NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership, local health boards, and the Welsh Government. The programme plays a key role in expanding nursing capacity, ensuring high-quality patient care across the region’s hospitals.

Feedback from International Educated Nurses



Recognising the importance of supporting new staff—particularly those from overseas—the Health Board has tailored its recruitment and induction processes to provide essential guidance and resources. This includes the introduction of a Workplace Buddy scheme, which pairs new nurses with experienced colleagues who offer support, foster good practice, and help with settling into the work environment. The International Recruitment Project Team, Culture and Workforce Experience Team and Workforce and Organisational Development team have continued to work closely throughout 2024/25 with our International Educated staff, providing holistic support in addition to being a point of contact for them to raise any issues they may face in their new roles and surroundings.

During this reporting period, Phase 3 of the International Registered Nurse Recruitment Programme was successfully completed, resulting in the recruitment of 99 nurses from Kerala, India.

To facilitate their integration into the Health Board, International Liaison Nurses (ILNs) provided essential pastoral support, greeting the new nurses upon arrival, helping them familiarise themselves with the locality, and introducing them to available services. A comprehensive support package was implemented, extending beyond initial onboarding to include guidance during Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) preparation, ward placements, and ward rounds, through to the point of professional revalidation. Additionally, a dedicated welcome, wellbeing, and ward preparation day was arranged during the nurses' initial months to further support their transition.

Securing private rental accommodation was identified as a priority to ensure nurses felt safe and experienced minimal anxiety during their early days within Hywel Dda University Health Board. The ongoing wellbeing of the International Educated Nurses (IENs) remains a priority, with ILNs maintaining regular contact and support. A dedicated OSCE team provided structured training to help nurses successfully complete their Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) OSCE exam, with all IENs achieving a successful outcome. The induction period, featuring prescribed classes delivered by OSCE trainers over several months, ensured that all nurses were fully prepared and supported for their examinations.

Throughout the process, the ILNs and OSCE team worked in close collaboration to meet the holistic needs of the IENs, ensuring their professional and personal transition was as smooth and supportive as possible.

The Diversity and Inclusion team also played a crucial role in welcoming overseas nurses, encouraging open discussions and providing a platform for them to share experiences and concerns. Dedicated sessions have ensured that nurses are aware of the support available from the Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion team, how to access that support, and the various staff networks within the Health Board. As part of Person-Centred Approach training, the Diversity and Inclusion team has also promoted the Speak Up scheme, which enables staff to raise concerns anonymously. Delivering this training in person has strengthened efforts to ensure that new nurses feel supported, welcomed, and informed about local resources as they settle into their roles and communities.

The Workplace Buddy scheme plays a vital role in easing the transition for new staff, helping them integrate more comfortably while promoting high-quality and safe practice. Support during the initial weeks and months has a significant impact on a new colleague's experience, contributing to staff retention and overall well-being. Through these initiatives, Hywel Dda University Health Board remains committed to fostering a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive environment for all nurses, ensuring they have the resources, mentorship, and opportunities to thrive in their new roles.



Celebrating Diversity

The Health Board's Business, Partnerships and Inclusion Team produces an annual Diversity Calendar, encouraging teams to promote cultural and religious events relevant to their service areas. To further support awareness, a monthly 'What's On' newsletter is shared, reminding staff of key celebrations. Both resources are distributed throughout the year via various communication channels.

During 2024-2025, several celebration events took place, with a selection highlighted below:

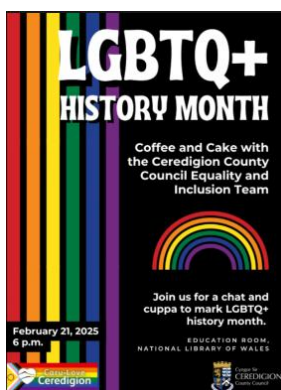
Black History Month

The Black History Month theme for 2024 was Reclaiming Narratives. To mark the occasion the Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion Team promoted several local and national events including 'Cynefin in Ceredigion - A family fun day to celebrate the richness of diverse cultures and heritages of people that live in Ceredigion and a Windrush @75 Documentary. The Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion Team also promoted the Anti Racism - ESR learning resources as well as a selection of books relevant to Black History Month available from the Health Board libraries. We also promoted the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff network.



LGBTQ+ History Month

Throughout history LGBTQ+ people have been activists and helped shape and create social change, advancing society for everyone. Because of this the theme for LGBTQ+ history Month in 2025 was: Activism and Social Change. To mark the event the Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion Team promoted several local and national events covering topics such as 'Activism and Social Change for NHS Colleagues'. The Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion Team also promoted learning resources and it's Enfys staff network.



What's On - External Events

Royal Society of Arts LGBTQIA+ Network
A free online event in collaboration with UK Black Pride, led by pioneering LGBTQ+ rights, anti-racism and social justice campaigner Lady Phyll who will be leading a panel discussion and audience Q&A.
3rd Feb 2025, 4pm - 6pm, Online
[Click here to register.](#)

Royal College of Physicians - Queer Anatomies
As part of LGBTQ+ History Month, American historian of the visual culture of medicine and science, Michael Sappol, will be discussing his new book Queer Anatomies. Join this illustrated talk to explore this often-overlooked archive of closeted queer expression.
26th Feb 2025, 6pm - 8pm, Online
[Click here to register.](#)

Activism and Social Change for NHS Colleagues
This event will include case studies on inspirational activists, a keynote session featuring a personal story of advocacy and impact. The event aims to inform and motivate individuals and organisations to drive change, foster inclusion, and honour the legacy of LGBTQIA+ activism.
27th Feb 2025, 12:30pm - 3:30pm, Online
[Click here to register.](#)

LGBT+ History Month

LGBT+ History Month is a dedicated space to celebrate the rich and diverse history, heritage, and identity.

Throughout history LGBTQ+ people have been activists and helped shape and create social change, advancing society for everyone. Because of this the theme for this year is:

Activism and Social Change

Join the ENFY'S Staff Network

A supportive space for LGBTQ+ staff, providing a platform for advice, support, and guidance. The network holds quarterly meetings online and organises a range of social events, advisory sessions, and bespoke training throughout the year.

To join the Network, visit:
<https://forms.office.com/e/Up2w6kL0w>

Learning Resources

Click on the links below to access the resources, or click here to visit our [LGBTQ+ Learning Resources SharePoint page](#). Alternatively, you can search for Business, Partnerships and Inclusion on SharePoint

- Understanding LGBTQ+ Terms (Bilingual Poster)
- Transgender Is... (Bilingual Poster)
- Pride Flags Explained (Video)
- Trans Awareness with Polly Zepherin, Gender Nurse Specialist (Video)
- Trans Awareness with Dr Sophie Quinney (Video)
- Part 1 Part 2 Part 3
- <https://lgbtqhistorymonth.co.uk/light-history-month-2025/>
- Fighting With Pride - The LGBTQ+ Veterans Charity (webpage)
- <https://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk>
- The stories of those who served or were deeply affected by the gay ban in the UK Military (video)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59uTroyYMs>

Contact Us

If you have any questions or require further information or support, please contact us via the details below.
Email: Inclusion.HDD@wales.nhs.uk
Visit the [Business, Partnerships and Inclusion SharePoint page](#)

Menopause Month

October is Menopause Awareness Month, with World Menopause Day observed annually on 18 October. This initiative aims to break taboos and enhance women's health and wellbeing by raising awareness about menopause symptoms and available support options. To mark this occasion, the Business, Partnerships, and Inclusion Team facilitated a Menopause Q&A Session with the Health Board's Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist. Additionally, they promoted various local and national events covering topics such as "Menopause at Work," "The Menopause and Your Pensions," and "Perimenopause Q&A on Black Women's Experiences."

Furthermore, the staff psychological wellbeing team compiled a range of resources to help the Health Board become more menopause-aware and supportive. These resources were made accessible to staff via our online information resource.

Perimenopause Q&A on Black women's Experiences
Online Event - October 11th 12:00-14:45
This event provides a safe and supportive space for Black women to share, learn, and connect as they navigate perimenopause, menopause and Black women's experiences. Learn from experts in reproductive health and perimenopause. Share your experiences and hear from others in the community. Get your questions answered by professionals who are dedicated to improving health outcomes for Black women. Register for the event here: [PLEASE NOTE THIS EVENT IS FREE HOWEVER, A DONATION IS SUGGESTED.](#)

Menopause Q&A Session with Alan Treherne, Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
Online Event - October 18th 12:00-14:00
October 18th 12:00-14:00
This event is an opportunity for you to pose your question to an expert, this can be done anonymously through the following link as you can ask on the day. [Click here to submit questions](#)
To register for the event please email: inclusion_hhd@wales.nhs.uk

Menopause at Work?
Online Event - October 19th 13:30-14:30
Zayne Woodman will be the speaker at this event and will cover the following:
- Understand the impact of the menopause and potentially reduce menopause related issues:
- Maintain productivity, retain talent, understand and increase loyalty;
- Understand how to help women of menopause age;
- Keep on the right side of UK employment law;
- Team Leader/Manager menopause conversations;
- Signposting.
Register for the event here: [Events - Academi.Wales.gov.wales](#)

The Menopause and your pension
Online Event - October 19th 10:30-11:30
- 1:1s for those with a Defined Benefits Pension - [To register click here](#)
- 1:1s for those with a Defined Contribution Pension - [To register click here](#)
In this session the MoneyWise Pensions specialists will explain what impact the menopause could have on your pension. These sessions will be recorded.
For more information or support please contact: inclusion_hhd@wales.nhs.uk

Supporting Pride events

Members of the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team alongside members of the Health Board's Enfy's LGBTQ+ staff network represented the Health Board at several local Pride events, including PRIDE Cymru (Cardiff), Swansea Pride, Llanelli Pride, Pembrokeshire Pride and Aber Pride (Aberystwyth).

Other speciality services, including Immunisations and vaccinations, midwifery, Community Development Outreach Team and the Wellbeing Team attended various events to promote the Health Board's commitment to LGBTQ+ communities both as an employer and as a healthcare provider. During Pride events members of the public were able to access health promotion information, discuss any matters of concern and seek advice.



Diwali Celebration Unites Cultures at Hywel Dda Health Board

On 10th November 2024, Hywel Dda University Health Board celebrated Diwali in an event organised by the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Staff Network and allies. Recognising the significance of Diwali in the lives of many of our colleagues, the celebration, featuring vibrant decorations, Rangoli, and flickering Diyas lamps, also aimed to promote diversity and inclusivity among Health Board staff members and colleagues.

The event opened with a warm welcome, a brief introduction (delivered by a member of the staff network) highlighting the significance of Diwali and providing an insight into the customs and traditions of the celebration. Attendees at the event were captivated by cultural performances, including traditional dances and music as well as several interactive party games and a short quiz.

Members of the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Staff Network also shared homemade dishes, representing various cultural backgrounds as part of a multicultural feast on offer at the event.

Senior leadership team members were also in attendance at the event and conveyed messages of support and encouragement, wishing attendees health, wealth, and happiness.

The celebration reinforced a sense of belonging, demonstrating how embracing cultural diversity can strengthen community bonds and enrich shared experiences.



Staff Networks

The Business, Partnerships and Inclusion Team has contributed to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace environment throughout 2024-2025. Through the facilitation of a diverse range of staff support networks, each tailored to meet the unique needs of our employees.



These networks include:

- **Armed Forces Network:** Providing support and resources for staff who are current or former members of the armed forces community.
- **Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Network:** Focusing on the needs and experiences of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, promoting diversity and inclusion within the workplace.
- **Enfys (LGBTQ+) Network:** Offering a safe and supportive space for LGBTQ+ employees, advocating for equality and inclusion.
- **Menopause Network:** Addressing the specific needs of staff experiencing menopause, as well as those who want to learn more, providing support and raising awareness.
- **Respectability Networks:** We have two distinct Respectability Staff Networks:
 - One for staff with any disability or long-term condition.
 - Another for colleagues who are Neurodivergent, ensuring tailored support and resources.
- **Unpaid Carers Network:** Supporting staff who have unpaid caring responsibilities, offering resources and a community of understanding.
- **50+ Café:** Creating a space for staff aged 50 and above to connect, share experiences, and access relevant support.

These networks have played a crucial role in promoting a culture of inclusivity and support, ensuring that all staff members feel valued and empowered within our organisation.

As well as providing space for peer support, the Staff Networks are a place for shared learning, with several guest speakers delivering sessions on a variety of topics. These include the Health Boards 'Speak up safely' platform, Coaching opportunities for staff network members, Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service, Access to work and Developing a Health Passport for staff. Topics delivered during staff network sessions are aligned to the interests expressed by staff network members.

Armed Forces Staff Network

The Health Board's Armed Forces Staff Network is now well-established, with over 85 members actively contributing to collaborative meetings and partnership initiatives. In June 2024, a Reservist co-presented the Armed Forces Covenant Report at the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee (PODCC) meeting, sharing their experiences.

Members regularly participate in the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group and are consulted on relevant projects. The network also benefits from a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel, fostering ongoing discussion and information sharing on staff wellbeing and training opportunities.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Network

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Network has remained proactive in leading cultural celebrations throughout 2024-2025. This year, it hosted its third annual Diwali celebration and actively promoted Black History Month and World Food Day to highlight achievements and cultural diversity.

The Network also explored the creation of a book club to foster reading and cultural awareness, further enriching workplace inclusivity. Through these initiatives, it continues to enhance engagement and understanding across the organisation.

The Aspiring Board Members Programme was also shared with all Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic staff network members, offering a structured leadership development opportunity to support and prepare people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds for Independent Board Member roles within health bodies in Wales. The programme seeks to enable a wider diversity of individuals to play their part in the future of NHS Wales.



Case Study: Promoting Diversity through World Food Day

In October 2024, the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff Network, led by the Vice Chair, organised World Food Day to enhance diversity awareness.

The primary goal was to celebrate cultural diversity and foster appreciation for different cultures within our workplace. This was part of our broader strategy, driven by the Diversity Calendar 2024, to bring diversity awareness to life through various events and activities planned during our staff network meetings.

To achieve this, we dedicated the day to offering staff and patients in our local canteens a chance to enjoy international cuisine from around the world. The Catering Teams were instrumental in this effort, showcasing their creativity not only in preparing diverse dishes but also in designing eye-catching flyers and posters to promote the event.

The engagement from the catering staff was exceptional. Their enthusiasm and creativity were evident in the variety of dishes prepared and the vibrant promotional materials created. This collaborative effort ensured that the event was well-publicised and eagerly anticipated by both staff and patients.

The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive. Many individuals expressed their enjoyment of the exotic dishes and their eagerness to experience more such culinary events in the future. The success of World Food Day highlighted the importance of celebrating diversity and the positive impact it can have on workplace culture.

Enfys - LGBTQ+ Staff Network

During this reporting period the Enfys staff network have welcomed a new Chair and a new vice chair who will be supported by the Diversity and Inclusion team to further develop the network. The Enfys staff network currently contains 65 members of staff and meets on a quarterly basis.



Members of the Health Board's Enfys LGBTQ Staff Network continued to represent the Health Board at several local Pride events throughout 2024. Members of the network were joined by members of the Business, Partnership and Inclusion team as well as several speciality services from across the Health Board. Attendance at these events enable members of the public to provide feedback, discuss any matters of concern and seek advice from the Diversity and Inclusion team, Sexual Health team, Immunisations and Vaccinations team, Smoking Cessation team and our Maternity Services team.

Menopause Café

The Health Board's Menopause Café continues to thrive, supporting staff affected by or preparing for menopause. Membership has grown to over 206 members during 2024-2025. Facilitated by a Consultant Obstetrician Gynaecologist, sessions cover key topics such as menopause and perimenopause symptoms, Hormone Replacement Therapy, weight management, and nutrition, while also dispelling myths.



Participants can ask questions—either anonymously or during sessions—to shape future discussions and enhance workplace support. A dedicated MS Teams channel enables ongoing resource sharing and peer support.

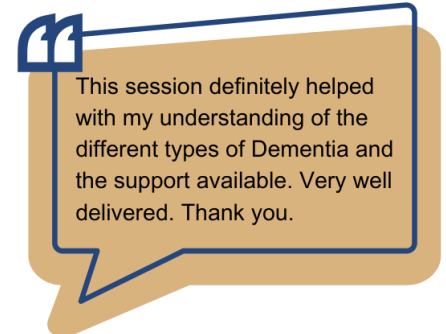
Respectability Staff Network

Throughout 2024/25, the Health Board's RespectAbility Staff Network continued to grow, with 80 members in the physical disabilities and long-term conditions group and 63 in the neurodivergent group. The network hosted guest speakers on topics such as access to work, digital platforms, and VIVA Engage, offering valuable insights. It also facilitated staff feedback on the proposed Health Passport, aimed at improving workplace support. Additionally, RespectAbility contributed to resources for key awareness events, including Autism Awareness, ADHD Awareness Month, and Neurodiversity Celebration Week, reinforcing its commitment to inclusivity and staff wellbeing.

Unpaid Carers staff peer support group

The Carers Team facilitates a carers peer support group for Health Board staff who have a caring role. This continues to be run monthly over MS Teams, during this reporting period the support group sessions were attended by 78 Health Board staff. Sessions included presentations from guest speakers, addressing topics based on members' interests and providing opportunities for involvement in policy and strategy development.

A dedicated Microsoft Teams channel was created to facilitate discussion, information sharing, and access to recordings of past meetings with guest speakers.



50+ Cafe

The Health Board's 50+ Café continues to grow, supporting staff in the later stages of their careers. Membership reached 101 in 2024/2025, with discussions covering topics such as VIVA Engage, a new communication platform, and the development of a staff health and wellbeing tool. The Café also promoted pension-focused webinars and roadshows, which have been highly sought after, with plans for additional sessions in the future.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Training

Throughout 2024-2025 the Diversity and Inclusion Team continued to offer a range of specialist equality, diversity and inclusion training to staff members across the Health Board to help them develop a better understanding of the challenges faced by people with a protected characteristic and marginalised communities.

During 2024-2025 the Diversity and Inclusion team delivered a total of 74 training sessions to staff on a broad range of topics including:

- First Steps to LGBTQ+ Inclusion and First Steps to trans Inclusion
- Trans Awareness Training
- Religion and Belief Training, Anti-Racism for practitioners and Working with Minority Ethnic Children, Young People and families
- Disability Awareness and Making Reasonable Adjustments
- Carers and Sensory loss

Feedback from staff that attended Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training throughout 2024-2025 included:

I just wanted to say the session was fantastic. It was the most engaging online training I've attended, and I think an amazing job was done engaging with participants. Thank you so much!

This was certainly a thought-provoking session, and I would encourage my whole team to attend future training opportunities. It was delivered well, thank you

Extremely informative, really well presented and has motivated me to be more pro-active in tackling racism not just in work but in all aspects of life.

I've gained knowledge and insight into how our attitudes as individuals and as an organisation need to continue to be challenged, this course has made me feel that I am better able to speak out if I encounter any racist behaviour/attitudes within my workplace.

The Business, Partnerships and Inclusion team continue to develop and build their library of learning resources which Health Board staff can access via the Business, Partnerships and Inclusion online information resources page. This includes recordings of MS Teams training sessions, YouTube videos, podcasts, links to online webinars and information categorised by protected characteristic allowing staff to access relevant information as and when required.

Inclusive Recruitment Training

Hywel Dda University Health Board remains committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion through its Inclusive Recruitment Training. This initiative ensures fair and accessible hiring practices by providing managers with guidance on best recruitment practices, interview techniques, and the Health Board's recruitment system.

The programme also includes education on the Equality Act 2010, emphasising the importance of reasonable adjustments for staff and applicants. Accessible recruitment guidance is available via the Health Board's intranet, supporting managers in implementing inclusive strategies.

To enhance its impact, the Health Board collaborates with organisations such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Welsh Government's Disabled People's Employment Champions, helping to recruit individuals with disabilities and improve workplace inclusivity.

Equitable Access to Training

The Learning and Development team has established a system to monitor study leave requests and course enrolments, allowing them to identify under-represented staff groups and provide targeted support. Organisational Development Relationship Managers are actively working to address cultural barriers within teams to ensure fair access to training.

Over the past year, significant progress has been made in centralising training data to enhance engagement metrics, particularly from an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) perspective. Collaboration with partners is ongoing to integrate external data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of training participation across the organisation. The Health Board has partnered with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) to secure funding for training opportunities aimed at staff in bands 2-4. These opportunities focus on developing skills in areas such as digital proficiency, minute taking, and basic project management. Despite promotional efforts through Viva Engage, engagement levels have been lower than expected. To address this, outreach strategies are being refined to increase participation among Facilities, Estates, administrative, and digital staff.

Payroll data collection through study leave and higher award systems has improved EDI reporting. However, this data currently only reflects access to external learning opportunities. To ensure a more unified and effective approach, work is underway to centralise all training data, providing a complete picture of staff engagement. While challenges remain, these initiatives demonstrate ongoing efforts to build a strong foundation for inclusive training and development, ensuring all staff members can access the opportunities they need to grow.

Listening to our staff - Speak Up and Make Meaningful Change

The Speak Up and Make Meaningful Change initiative continues to drive cultural change across the Health Board by fostering psychological safety and reinforcing trust, openness, and honesty. Ensuring that staff feel confident to raise concerns and report incidents is essential in maintaining a transparent and supportive working environment.

Findings from the 2024 NHS Wales Staff Survey indicate encouraging progress in fostering a culture of transparency and support. Seventy-four percent of staff agree that the organisation encourages reporting of errors, near misses, or incidents, reflecting a 4% increase from 2023. Staff confidence in speaking up about unethical behaviours remains strong at 76%, aligning with national results. Additionally, 50% of respondents believe that staff involved in incidents are treated fairly, reflecting a 12% improvement compared to the previous year. Meanwhile, 57% recognise that appropriate action is taken to prevent repeated incidents, marking a 7% increase. Although these findings indicate some progress compared to the 2023 survey, we acknowledge that further efforts are needed to enhance these experiences. To address this, a new action plan has been developed and is currently under discussion and agreement at the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee.

Additionally, the staff survey results have been presented to Board members, leading to the identification of three corporate themes for targeted focus in 2025:

- Nurturing healthy working environments – addressing negative experiences
- Patient safety
- Morale

While the Health Board is recognised as an exemplar organisation across Wales, embedding a strong speaking-up culture remains a priority. The next phase of the Speak Up and Make Meaningful Change agenda will focus on strengthening staff confidence through targeted engagement initiatives, enhancing leadership accountability to ensure concerns are addressed appropriately, and further developing training and support mechanisms. Efforts will also be made to expand communication channels, making it easier for staff to report concerns and engage in open discussions.

By prioritising psychological safety and transparency, the Health Board reinforces its commitment to meaningful cultural change, ensuring staff feel empowered, valued, and supported in raising concerns.



Organisational Development Programme

Over the past 12 months, significant progress has been made in our Organisational Development programme aimed at fostering healthy and happy working cultures. The introduction of the Relationship Manager role in 2021 has been pivotal in providing proactive and responsive support to local teams. This role has been instrumental in promoting staff well-being and improving workplace culture, ultimately benefiting patient care.

In 2022, we co-developed a culture framework in partnership with our Trade Union colleagues, based on seven key themes identified by our staff. This framework has guided the creation of People Culture Plans, which are corporately aligned and locally owned, enhancing staff experiences and supporting our attraction and retention strategies.

From April to October 2024, each directorate across the Health Board received support from an Organisational Development Relationship Manager (ODRM). These managers engaged with services to understand and improve staff experiences using qualitative and quantitative data, including insights from a bespoke culture survey. This informed the co-creation of People Culture Plans, fostering local ownership and continuous progress measurement. Additionally, we began scoping methods to layer data from various sources for a richer understanding of cultural patterns, further informing our Organisational Development responses.

Between October 2024 and March 2025, ODRMs continued their efforts to promote healthy working cultures. They engaged with teams to understand staff needs, and supported conflict resolution through restorative approaches like mediation and facilitated conversations. These initiatives have been crucial in addressing wider cultural issues, including bullying and harassment, as identified in the 2023 All Wales Staff Survey.

Overall, the Organisational Development programme has made substantial strides in enhancing staff well-being and workplace culture, with positive feedback and anticipation for future developments.

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIAs)

The Health Board remains committed to ensuring that all policies, new services, and service developments undergo Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs). These assessments help identify potential impacts across the nine protected characteristics, as well as considerations related to Welsh language, socio-economic disadvantage, and the Armed Forces Covenant Duty. Data sources such as Local Assessments of Well-being, Census 2021, and Regional Pharmaceutical Needs Assessments inform these evaluations.

Over the past year, the Diversity and Inclusion team has enhanced EqIA support by introducing a guided template, an updated screening tool, a new guidance document with examples to consider, and a video resource. Staff feedback has been positive, and the improved EqIA format includes a new scoring matrix that better captures impact and opportunities, leading to more informed decision making.

To improve record-keeping, an automated EqIA log has been developed, ensuring easy access to documentation and quality assurance before assessments are presented to boards and committees. Additionally, the team continues to provide regular training, delivering EqIA-specific sessions across various departments and embedding EqIA training within the Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice (EQIIP) programme to support service improvements.

Members of the Diversity and Inclusion team actively participate in policy approval groups and service redesign steering committees to ensure thorough EqIA processes. Furthermore, the Health Board utilises Engagement HQ and Tractivity software to enhance communication and engagement with communities, ensuring diverse voices are heard during consultations.

Throughout 2024-2025, the Diversity and Inclusion team has supported the completion of 222 EqIAs, reinforcing its commitment to inclusive and equitable healthcare development and decision making.

Staff wellbeing Events

Over the last 12 months the Diversity and Inclusion team have linked in with Staff Wellbeing events. These Staff Wellbeing events provide a better engagement environment where the Diversity and Inclusion team have greater access to more staff members, and can provide advice on equality, diversity and inclusion matters. The Diversity and Inclusion team are also able to promote other services the team offer; these include:

- Training – training and learning resources available on each of the protected characteristics
- Equality Impact Assessment - support on completing Equality Impact Assessments
- Advice – advice on all EDI related concerns and queries
- Interpretation and Translation – help with using interpretation and translation services.
- Promotion of our staff networks



Consultation and Engagement during 2024-2025

Throughout 2024-2025, we have continued to work collaboratively with key stakeholders and partners to advance consultation and engagement efforts for the development of a new urgent and planned care hospital, as well as the wider Programme Business Case outlined in the *Healthier Mid and West Wales* strategy. Extensive engagement has been carried out with staff, service users, stakeholders, and the public to ensure comprehensive representation and input.

During this reporting period, significant consultation work has been undertaken on:

- Prince Philip Hospital Minor Injuries Unit (MIU) services
- Carmarthen Hwb scheme
- Pentre Awel scheme

Detailed equality monitoring of attendees has ensured that engagement efforts reach individuals and groups who share protected characteristics, as well as those who may be reluctant or face barriers in accessing Health Board discussions. The Diversity and Inclusion Team remains committed to promoting dialogue and engagement with individuals from marginalised communities, ensuring that all voices are heard and included in the decision-making processes surrounding healthcare services.

By continuing to prioritise inclusivity and meaningful engagement, we strive to create a healthcare system that reflects the diverse needs of our community while ensuring equal access to high-quality care for all.

Looking forward to 2025-26

This annual report highlights the extensive work undertaken by the Health Board during 2024-25 to implement the strategic equality objectives outlined in the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

Our Strategic Equality Plan is built around four key objectives:

- **Equality Objective 1:** Leadership by all
- **Equality Objective 2:** Working together to improve health and well-being for all
- **Equality Objective 3:** Embedding a person-centred approach
- **Equality Objective 4:** Being an employer of choice

To support these objectives, we have developed a comprehensive Action Plan, detailing specific actions, responsibilities, timelines, and intended outcomes. A mid-point review of the plan will be conducted during 2025-26, allowing us to assess progress, refine strategies, and adapt actions for the remaining two years of the Strategic Equality Plan.

Engagement and collaboration with our communities remain at the heart of our approach, ensuring equal opportunities and promoting health and well-being across our population. The responsibility for implementing these objectives extends to all employees, including Board members, staff, volunteers, and contractors delivering services on behalf of the Health Board.

Creating a fair and inclusive environment requires cultural transformation, challenging long-standing practices, and dismantling barriers. Through collective effort, we will continue working towards a more equitable and inclusive healthcare system that benefits everyone.