

# HEIW Communication And Engagement Strategic Framework

2025-2030

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# 1: Introduction and Background

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) is the strategic workforce body for NHS Wales. As a Special Health Authority, we lead the education, training, and strategic development of the health education workforce in Wales. Our vision is “to develop a skilled and sustainable workforce that improves care and population health”. Our purpose is, “as part of the NHS, to work with partners to plan, develop, educate and train the current and future workforce.

The 12 statutory bodies within NHS Wales rely on a well-supported workforce to deliver high-quality care. Workforce supply, composition, and wellbeing are critical to the efficiency, quality, and long-term sustainability of healthcare. HEIW plays a strategic role in workforce planning and education, making it essential that we engage with partners, collaborate across sectors, and clearly communicate our contributions to jointly drive workforce and education improvement.

This is a whole-organisation strategic framework that applies to all HEIW functions and requires the commitment and active participation of all staff. It provides a framework for HEIW to enhance its communication and engagement approach by fostering transparency, collaboration, and alignment with strategic goals.

By strengthening stakeholder relationships and improving internal and external communication, HEIW will deliver greater impact, ensuring that NHS Wales benefits from a well-trained and sustainable workforce.

This strategic framework has been informed by and is an enabler to other key HEIW documents and strategies, including:

- 📌 **Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care:** Supports a skilled, adaptable workforce to meet evolving healthcare demands.
- 📌 **Compassionate Leadership Principles:** Embeds compassionate leadership principles in our messaging interactions and engagement.
- 📌 **HEIW People and OD Strategy:** Develops staff in communication, engagement, and relationship management as a core organisation skill set.
- 📌 **HEIW Digital and Data Strategy:** Leverages digital tools and workforce intelligence for enhanced engagement, insight and decision making.
- 📌 **HEIW Research and Evaluation Approach:** Provides data-driven insights to enhance decision-making and engagement.

# 1.1 Case for Change

HEIW has identified the importance of partnership working and collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders from its establishment and has always set out the intention “to be a helpful partner”. The early years were focused on forging effective relationships with other NHS organisations and getting to know the wide range of national organisations with an interest in workforce matters, within Wales and at a UK level.

During this time, stakeholder engagement has been built into many of our significant pieces of work such as; the Education and Training Plan, Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP), strategic workforce plans, and new leadership programmes to name but a few.

In November 2021 HEIW decided to establish a Stakeholder Reference Group, the purpose of which is to facilitate engagement, dialogue, and advice from stakeholders to inform HEIW’s strategic planning and decision making, including, key strategic plans, major transformation programmes and key service developments and changes.

Membership is intended to be widespread and inclusive across all stakeholders. In addition, we publish various targeted newsletters, a Stakeholder Bulletin, and hold an annual showcase event aligned with our AGM.

However, there is still more to do to establish a systematic and structured approach to strategic communication and engagement, to reflect changes and developments in HEIW and in our environment. There are still some stakeholders who do not have a full understanding of HEIW’s unique role and functions, and this can hinder the impact and effectiveness of what we are trying to achieve, or lead to duplication of work and confusion.

We don’t always engage with the right stakeholders at the right time in all our work programmes, and this can cause tension and misunderstandings that can take time to resolve.

In addition, we are not always on the front foot and sufficiently proactive in our communication and engagement, which means we lose the opportunity to influence and shape important workforce conversations. In some instances, a lack of skills and understanding about the importance of strategic communication and relationship management, impact on the visibility of important work amongst our NHS partners.

These issues need to be addressed to ensure HEIW can play its full part in supporting the NHS workforce. Strategic engagement and communication is an essential activity for the organisation, not an optional extra.

## 1.2 Objectives

Building on the case for change, the following objectives have been developed that will deliver a more strategic approach to communication and engagement:

### Objective 1. Establish a systematic and structured approach:

Ensure consistency, quality, and impact in all communications and engagement, with a focus on a proactive approach that is targeted to the right audiences.

### Objective 2. Increase stakeholder awareness:

Improve stakeholder understanding of HEIW's role, purpose, strategic priorities and operational delivery including the workforce initiatives, education programs, and leadership efforts and overall alignment with NHS Wales's priorities.

### Objective 3. Enhance collaboration & co-production:

Foster deeper partnerships, improve joint working, strengthen relationship management to ensure shared ownership and improved workforce solutions.

### Objective 4. Demonstrate value & impact:

Ensure stakeholders actively recognise HEIW's expertise, contributions, and positive influence, as the work directly aligns with their priorities and delivers meaningful benefits for NHS Wales.

### Objective 5. Strengthen HEIW's role as a trusted and helpful partner:

Reinforce HEIW's commitment to being an open, collaborative, responsive and agile organisation that listens adapts and delivers for stakeholders.

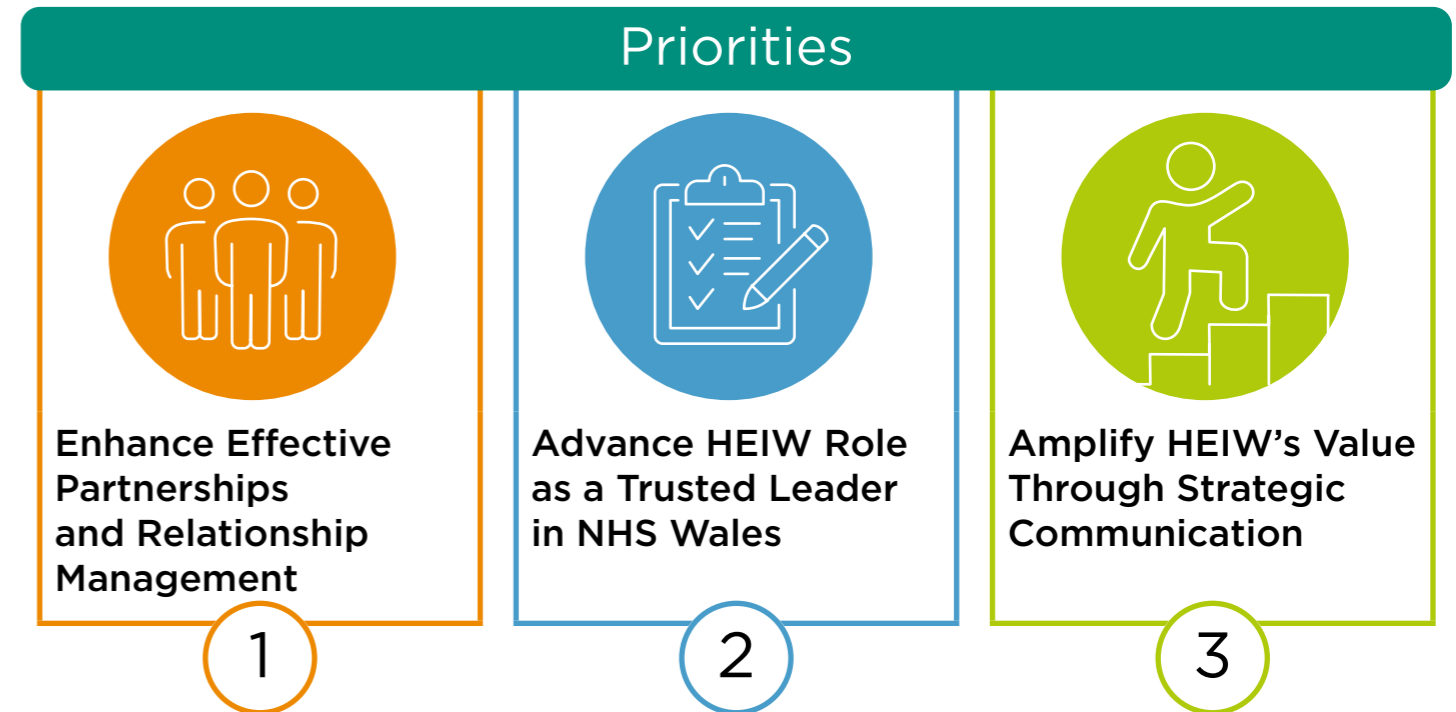
### Objective 6. Embed engagement and relationship management as a core organisational function:

Make collaboration an integral part of decision-making, risk management, and strategic planning, ensuring engagement is embedded at all levels of the organisation.

**Objective 7. Recognition as an expert leader:** Strengthen HEIW's role as a leading voice on workforce and education insights, increasing its strategic influence and credibility across NHS Wales to deliver impactful workforce developments.

## 2: Strategic Priorities

To address the case for change and deliver against the objectives, three strategic priorities have been developed to direct action and identify areas of focus. They are:



To ensure their effective implementation, an annual delivery plan will be integrated into the HEIW IMTP, ensuring alignment with financial priorities, resource optimisation, and a structured approach to execution.

## 2.1 Priority One: Enhance Effective Partnerships and Relationship Management

Operating within a complex and interconnected system that spans multiple sectors and stakeholders, HEIW recognises that collaboration, co-production and relationship management are essential to achieving the goal of a skilled and sustainable NHS Wales workforce. Collaboration is at the heart of HEIW's approach.

Our key partners include health and care policy leaders, NHS Wales, care employers, educational institutions, and regulatory bodies, all of whom play a crucial role in shaping working conditions, environments, and educational standards.

HEIW will adopt a structured and proactive approach to stakeholder engagement and relationship management, embedding co-production and collaboration at every stage of strategic development priorities and core operational activities. By prioritising early, meaningful two-way engagement HEIW will co-develop better solutions to address systemic challenges and develop trusted partnerships and relationships.

Equally vital is the voice of our students, trainees, and workforce, whose lived experiences and insights help shape our approach. Their perspectives ensure that workforce and education solutions remain relevant, inclusive, and aligned with real-world challenges.

By embedding early and meaningful engagement, actively listening, and co-designing solutions with them, we will create an environment where they can thrive and contribute to a motivated and resilient NHS workforce.

The high-level delivery objectives to achieve this priority include:

### Stakeholder and Relationships Insights & Management:

Map stakeholders, their priorities and identify areas for collaboration to ensure that engagement is strategic and aligned with long-term goals. Focus on early and consistent engagement to foster trust, clarity and productive relationships. Maximise the use of stakeholder engagement software and its insight.

### Planned strategic engagement and relationship management:

Strengthen timely collaborations with key partners using a structured, organisation-wide approach to stakeholder engagement and relationship management. Including strengthening the role and function of the stakeholder reference group, use of conferences, events and stakeholder meetings.

This will ensure continuous communication, coproduction, involvement in decision-making, and meaningful contributions to workforce and education solutions and strategies. Align this to the delivery of strategic objectives and operational delivery plans.

### Improved Student, Trainee and Workforce Experience:

Actively engage students, trainees, and the workforce to co-design or collaborate on solutions that reflect their lived experiences, ensuring that workforce, education and training solutions are inclusive and aligned with real-world challenges.

### Outcomes of Priority One:

This priority meets the delivery objectives in relation to a structured and systematic approach to communication and engagement (objective 1), it delivers a focus on collaboration and co-production, it directly supports building deeper partnership, strengthening relationship management and ensuring shared ownership (objective 2).

By mapping stakeholders and fostering early, meaningful engagement, HEIW ensures that its communication is consistent, proactive, and targeted to the right audiences. By embedding student, trainee, and workforce voices into decision-making, HEIW actively demonstrates the value and impact (Objective 4) of its work. Co-designing solutions with those directly affected ensures relevant, inclusive, and impactful workforce development initiatives.

This approach also strengthens HEIW's position as a trusted and helpful partner (Objective 5), reinforcing its reputation as an organisation that listens, adapts, and delivers in collaboration with its stakeholders.

## 2.2 Priority Two: Advance HEIW role as a Trusted Leader in NHS Wales

HEIW's success in driving improvements in workforce, education, culture, and leadership within NHS Wales depends on being a trusted, reliable, credible partner. To achieve this, we will support the system by curating expertise and playing an active role as a supportive system leader.

This priority is focused on building confidence in HEIW, ensuring that we deliver outcomes that stakeholders recognise and value. It places HEIW's expertise at the forefront of efforts to address and influence workforce challenges in NHS Wales.

Through consistent demonstration of expertise, evidence-based solutions, thought leadership, innovative approaches and data-driven insights, HEIW will advance its leadership role in supporting and driving system-wide change and workforce transformation.

This will solidify HEIW's role as a trusted partner. HEIW will ensure that both internal teams and external stakeholders' source, access and share the latest knowledge, innovative solutions, and best practices.

The high-level delivery objectives to achieve this priority include:

### Publishing Expertise and Best Practice:

Disseminate research, best practice, insights, intelligence, academic collaboration, and thought leadership to inform workforce and education work e.g. the development of the HEIW Education Strategy, the future role of clinical skills, new workforce models, innovation to address workforce supply and demand challenges and the transformation of the workforce closer to home.

### Data-Driven Insights:

Provide actionable intelligence to inform decision-making on education improvement and workforce development and planning, including supporting the implementation of the NHS Wales Workforce Strategy and Workforce Plans.

### Inform policy discussions:

HEIW will proactively share targeted, evidence-based content to reinforce its role as a trusted advisor in workforce and education policy. This will include policy briefings, research reports, discussion papers, and data-driven insights, ensuring stakeholders have access to timely, relevant information that supports informed decision-making.

### Communities of Practice:

Promote peer learning and collaboration across healthcare sectors to disseminate best practices and foster innovation, including facilitating networks for leadership development, workforce planning / redesign, learning and education, and retention initiatives.

### Outcomes of Priority Two:

Priority two strengthens HEIW's role as a trusted, credible partner (Objective 5) by curating expertise and actively shaping workforce transformation. Through publishing research, sharing best practices, and providing data-driven insights, HEIW ensures a structured and evidence-based approach (Objective 1) to informing workforce and education strategies. It also demonstrates measurable value (Objective 4).

By engaging in policy discussions and thought leadership, HEIW enhances influence collaboration and co-production (Objective 3). The promotion of Communities of Practice expands the reach and impact of HEIW's work (objective 4&7). Ultimately, this priority solidifies HEIW's position as a leading expert (Objective 7), increasing its influence in shaping NHS Wales's workforce future.

## 2.3 Priority 3: Amplify HEIW's Value Through Strategic Communication

Effective communication and engagement are essential for ensuring HEIW's work is well understood, widely adopted, and delivers maximum impact across NHS Wales. By systematically and strategically sharing and articulating the impact and value of HEIW's workforce transformation initiatives, education programs, leadership development efforts, and cultural initiatives, we can strengthen stakeholder relationships and drive collaboration across the system.

This mission aims to create cohesive messaging, proactive communication, and use of the most appropriate digital tools and channels to ensure HEIW's objectives and contributions are understood and aligned with the needs of NHS Wales. It will focus on consistent, transparent communication and engagement that strengthens internal and external relationships, ensuring HEIW's initiatives are adopted and have a lasting impact.

**The high-level delivery objectives to achieve this priority include:**

### Strategic Campaigns for Key Priorities:

Develop targeted communication strategies for strategic priorities outlined in the IMTP, ensuring HEIW's initiatives are clearly articulated, aligned with NHS priorities, and effectively communicated to key stakeholders in a timely manner.

### Impact-Focused Communication:

Develop communications that emphasise measurable benefits across all HEIW programmes, reinforcing HEIW's role in delivering value and quality.

### Proactive alignment with healthcare, education, and workforce initiatives and events:

Actively position HEIW within broader healthcare, education, and workforce transformation efforts by aligning communications with key events, campaigns, and policy discussions. For example; alignment with, UCAS results, careers week, national days for the professions, policy launches, think tank releases in relation to education and workforce. By embedding HEIW's voice in these critical conversations and events, increase reach, influence and relevance.

### Reactive Communication:

Ensure all crisis and reactive communications are managed in line with HEIW Media Handling Guidance and Crisis Management and Business Continuity plan. This includes preparing spokespeople, aligning messaging with HEIW's values, and ensuring that all communications are timely, accurate, and empathetic. This ensures transparency and helps maintain trust with stakeholders during challenging situations.

### Engagement Metrics:

Implement metrics to track the reach, effectiveness, and impact of communication efforts. This will include surveys, digital analytics, and feedback mechanisms to measure engagement levels and inform adjustments to communication strategies.

### Innovative Digital Tools:

Use the right communication channels and tools to deliver impactful messages and sharing information and resources to the right audience in the right way and the right time with the most impact. This includes all digital platforms, website, intranet and social media.

### Internal & External Alignment:

Ensure that staff are equipped with the right information and a clear understanding of HEIW's purpose, enabling them to advocate for the organisation and its strategic priorities, making every contact count.

### Outcomes of Priority Three:

Strengthening communication and engagement ensures HEIW's work is understood, adopted, and impactful across NHS Wales and with Stakeholders. By implementing this structured and strategic approach (Objective 1), HEIW enhances stakeholder awareness (Objective 2) through targeted campaigns and impact-driven communication, demonstrating measurable value (Objective 4).

Proactively aligning with key healthcare, education, and workforce initiatives, increases relevance and influence (objective 7) and collaboration and co-production (Objective 3). Effective crisis and reactive communication strengthen HEIW's trust and credibility as a reliable partner (Objective 5). Leveraging innovative digital tools and clear internal messaging, reinforces HEIW's recognition as a leading authority in workforce and education (Objective 7).

## 3: Roles and Responsibilities

Defining roles and responsibilities within an organisation is essential to ensure clarity, accountability, quality and effective communication and engagement.

**Key roles and responsibilities are as follows:**

### Staff:

Ambassadors for HEIW they have a crucial role in sharing HEIW's key messages and information, engaging with stakeholders, and providing valuable feedback that shapes our solutions and strategies. Their insights can drive innovation, service improvement, and greater collaboration both internally and externally.

Every member of HEIW has a responsibility to uphold standards, whether sharing key messages, delivering presentations, writing content, or engaging directly with partners. By committing to high-quality communication in all interactions, we strengthen HEIW's reputation, enhance our influence, and create lasting impact across NHS Wales.

### Independent Board Members:

Provide governance, oversight, and advocacy by ensuring communication and engagement aligns with the organisation's strategy, values, and reputation. They oversee reputational risk, promote transparency, and act as external advocates, leveraging their networks and using communication channels to enhance credibility and stakeholder trust.

### Executives:

Set the strategic vision for communication and engagement, aligning it with the organisation's strategic direction, priorities and values. Proactively use tools and channels to ensure that priorities are communicated effectively both internally and externally.

They take the lead in initiating and driving collaborative efforts across departments. They empower all departments to address their communication, and engagement needs proactively taken forward the priorities in this framework. They maintain key strategic relationships to manage risks.

Executives are responsible for overall quality control of communications and engagement activities originating within their directorate. They have a key role in leading in crises and identifying proactive communication and engagement opportunities.



### Senior Leaders:

Senior leaders play a crucial role in championing HEIW's vision and strategic priorities, acting as visible ambassadors who clearly articulate the organisation's purpose, priorities, and impact. They are critical in crisis communication and driving change.

They lead by example, fostering open, transparent, and effective communication within teams and across the organisation, encouraging a culture of active listening and constructive feedback. Strengthening stakeholder relationships is key, as senior leaders build and maintain collaborative partnerships across stakeholders and partners.

They also take a proactive approach to relationship management, ensuring stakeholders are informed, engaged, and aligned with HEIW's work. Senior leaders ensure consistency and quality in all communication efforts, compliance with best practices and legislation, and upholds quality standards.

Measuring impact is essential, with leaders using data-driven insights and stakeholder feedback to assess communication and engagement effectiveness, refine strategies, and enhance engagement.

### Communications and Engagement Department:

The central communications and engagement team will lead HEIW's strategic communication and engagement efforts and will focus on high-value strategic initiatives, including IMTP and ETP communication, stakeholder identification and management, and ensuring adherence to legislation and best practice and insight-driven approach. They will shape HEIW's narrative, manage media relations, and oversee reputation and risk management.

They will provide expert support to senior leaders to enable them to develop capability and capacity in their own areas so that there is a devolved model across HEIW. To build capability across the organisation, the central team will upskill and enable departments to manage their own communication and engagement activities, while maintaining strategic alignment.

They will provide guidance documents, tailored training, workshops, and e-learning resources, ensuring a consistent, high-quality approach to engagement. Targeted development programmes will also support senior leaders and managers, equipping them with the skills to drive effective communication as part of strategic decision-making.



## 4: Guiding Principles to Support Implementation

When implementing this strategic framework, actions and implementation plans will be developed based on seven guiding principles, that set the approach to effective communication and engagement from HEIW:

1. **Strategic Alignment:** Maintain a cohesive and consistent approach aligned to HEIW purpose and strategic aims.
2. **Clarity & Transparency:** Communicate and engage clearly, openly, honestly, and consistently, with purpose and intent.
3. **Collaborative & Inclusive Engagement:** Foster meaningful dialogue, ensuring effective partnerships and co-production.
4. **Expert & Data-Informed Leadership:** Leverage workforce intelligence, best practice, research and insight to enhance impact.
5. **Accessible & Equitable:** Ensure inclusivity through bilingual and multi-format communication and engagement.
6. **Trust, Accountability & Compliance:** Uphold ethical standards, legal compliance and evidence based best practices to deliver high quality and professional services.
7. **Continuous Learning & Innovation:** Use feedback and digital advancements to refine and continuously improve communication and engagement activities.

## 5: Evaluation and Monitoring

The strategic frameworks effectiveness will be assessed through Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to ensure alignment with HEIW's strategic goals. CSFs define key success conditions, such as leadership commitment, consistent messaging, and stakeholder engagement. KPIs will track measurable outcomes.

### Critical Success Factors (CSFs):

- 📌 **Strategic Alignment:** Communication and engagement support HEIW purpose and strategic priorities.
- 📌 **Leadership Commitment:** Senior leaders champion effective high-quality communication and engagement and relationship management.
- 📌 **Clear, Impactful Messaging:** Communication is timely, consistent, and demonstrates measurable value to stakeholders.
- 📌 **Two-Way Engagement:** Open dialogue and co-production ensure stakeholder voices shape workforce and education solutions.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- 📌 **Stakeholder Engagement & Satisfaction:** Measured by surveys, participation, and Net Promoter Score.
- 📌 **Message Reach & Consistency:** Website traffic, email engagement, and social media.
- 📌 **Two-Way Communication:** Feedback mechanisms and response rates.
- 📌 **Impact on Organisational Goals:** Adoption rate of communication-driven initiatives.

## 6: Conclusion

This strategic framework outlines a clear approach and intent to enhance communication and engagement. Delivery will ensure we are engaging, collaborating, leading and communicating with clarity and purpose to build trusted partnerships that cultivate a skilled and sustainable workforce, in NHS Wales.