GIG CYMRU NHS WALES

Addysg a Gwella Iechyd Cymru (AaGIC)
Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW)

# Annual Quality Report 2025/26



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# Foreword from Chair and Chief Executive Officer

We are pleased to present HEIW's Quality Report, which sets out how we continue to place quality at the centre of everything we do.

As the national education, training and workforce organisation for NHS Wales, our role is to develop, support and shape a workforce that is capable, compassionate and equipped to meet the changing needs of the people of Wales. The quality of our education, training and workforce development has a direct influence on the quality and safety of care delivered across the NHS, making continuous improvement both a responsibility and a priority.

The report provides an overview of the progress made during the year, the impact of our work, and the actions we are taking to continually improve. It also demonstrates the strength of our partnerships, working collaboratively with Health Boards, Trusts, Higher Education Institutions, Professional Regulators, Welsh Government and many other stakeholders, to support the development of a sustainable, skilled and adaptable workforce. These partnerships are fundamental to achieving our shared ambition of improving health outcomes across Wales.

We continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our work, promote the Welsh language, and contribute to the NHS Wales decarbonisation agenda, recognising that quality extends beyond educational delivery to every aspect of how we operate as an organisation.

Whilst proud of the progress highlighted in this report, we recognise that quality is not a destination and the challenges facing health and care services continue to evolve, and so too must our approach. We remain committed to listening to learners and partners, using evidence to drive improvement, and ensuring that our education and training programmes continue to meet the changing needs of the workforce and the population we serve.

We would like to thank our staff, learners, educators, partners and stakeholders for their continued expertise and collaboration. Their commitment enables HEIW to fulfil its purpose and make a meaningful contribution to the future of healthcare in Wales.



**Chris Jones**
Chair



**Alex Howells**
Chief Executive Officer

# About the Annual Quality Report and Duty of Quality

Welcome to HEIW's Annual Duty of Quality Report for 2025 to 2026. This report is for the public and our Board and provides an opportunity to share how we are meeting the requirements of the Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020.

The Duty of Quality came into effect in April 2023 as part of this Act and sets out the legal requirements for all NHS organisations in Wales to continuously improve the quality of services they provide to people.

## Health and Care Quality Standards

The 12 Health and Care Quality Standards provide a practical framework to support us to meet the Duty of Quality. They describe what good quality care looks like in practice and help to structure how we embed quality into decision making, planning, delivery and monitoring our work.



There are six domains of quality and six enabling standards that support us to embed quality into our organisation.

Domains of quality

- Safe
- Timely
- Effective
- Efficient
- Equitable
- Person-centred

Enabling Standards

- Leadership
- Workforce
- Culture
- Information
- Learning, improvement and research
- Whole-systems approach

These standards create the conditions for high-quality care by strengthening leadership, workforce planning, culture, information, learning and improvement across the system.



# Who we are and our role in NHS Wales

HEIW is the statutory education body and strategic workforce organisation for NHS Wales. Our purpose is to work with partners to plan, develop, educate and train the current and future workforce. As a Special Health Authority, we address strategic and specialist workforce opportunities and risks through our statutory functions. Through workforce planning, education, training, leadership development and workforce transformation, we support NHS Wales to respond to current and future workforce needs.

Our culture and ways of working are central to our role as a workforce organisation. In partnership with staff, we have developed organisational values that support compassionate, inclusive and collaborative working. equality, Quality, diversity and sustainability are fundamental to, and embedded across, all our activities and functions.

**Respect for all**
In every interaction

**Together as a team**
Working collaboratively across NHS Wales and with partners.

**Ideas that improve**
Embracing creativity, innovation and continuous learning.



## Planning, Commissioning and Delivering Education and Training

We work with our education providers, regulators and service partners, to plan, commission, deliver and quality manage undergraduate and postgraduate education and training for a wide range of health professions.

HEIW produce the annual Education and Training Plan, making strategic recommendations to Welsh Government based on workforce requirements identified by NHS organisations and other partners.



## Leadership, Culture and Succession Planning

We design and deliver leadership programmes to improve talent management, supporting succession planning, and creating compassionate and collaborative cultures. Our Gwella Portal hosts a range of evidenced-based culture and leadership tools, including a supervision hub to support staff at all levels.



## Workforce Strategy, Planning, and Intelligence

In addition to providing strategic leadership for workforce planning across NHS Wales, we have a lead role in the development of strategic workforce plans and the provision of analytical insight and intelligence to support the development of the current and future shape of the workforce.

### Workforce Development and Transformation

Our transformation work focuses on providing workforce solutions to address service and workforce challenges. This includes skills development, role design, continuing professional development and career pathway development to inform decisions and support continuous improvement.

### Attraction, Careers and Widening Access

We lead work to promote health careers, widening access and strengthening Wales' reputation as a place to train and work. Our aim is to ensure that the education and training we offer is accessible to any people in our communities that have valuable skills and experience, including those who are currently under represented in our workforce.

### Revalidation Support Unit

The Revalidation Support Unit manages the appraisal and revalidation of the medical workforce. This includes appraisal delivery for all GPs in Wales and quality assurance of medical appraisal and revalidation processes of all designated bodies in Wales including those in the private sector. Learning needs analysis from medical appraisals along with national priorities inform the development of continuing professional development to support NHS Wales staff. HEIW is the largest designated body in Wales with responsibility for delivering and improving high quality appraisal and revalidation processes for all doctors in training.

Across all our functions, we use evidence, workforce intelligence, quality information and stakeholder insight to inform decisions and support continuous improvement.

## What does the Duty of Quality mean for HEIW?

Whilst HEIW does not directly provide patient care, we play a key role in developing and supporting the workforce across NHS Wales who do. Quality therefore is central to our work, which is focused on enabling care that is:

### Safe

Setting education and training standards, promoting patient safety, and embedding a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

### Timely

Planning and developing a sustainable workforce with the right skills and capacity to meet population needs.

### Effective

Ensuring education, training, and professional development are evidence-based and aligned with best practice.

### Effective

Supporting workforce models, role redesign, and skills optimisation to make best use of resources.

### = Equitable

Promoting inclusive education, widening access to careers, and developing a workforce that reflects the population it serves.

### Person-centred

Embedding values, behaviours, and communication skills that keep people and their needs at the centre of care.

## How we embed the Duty of Quality in HEIW

HEIW's approach to the Duty of Quality is focused on turning quality standards into practical, organisation-wide ways of working. During 2025/26, this meant strengthening how we plan for quality, listen to learners and partners, identify and manage concerns, use evidence to inform decisions, and report assurance through our governance routes. The sections below describe the systems that support this approach with examples to show how they are being applied in practice.

## Quality Plan

We see the Duty of Quality as an opportunity to strengthen a consistent organisation-wide approach to quality.

Our Quality Plan approved by the Board in March 2024 and embedded through the Integrated Medium-Term Plan 2025–2028 sets out our commitment to continuous improvement and highlights our system-wide role in supporting quality improvement.

The plan focuses on four key quality ambitions:

- Continuing to embed the duty of quality within our organisational culture
- Developing our Quality Management System (QMS)
- Strengthening how we listen and respond to learner voices
- Improving quality reporting processes

During the year, we strengthened the way quality is considered through Board, Executive and partnership arrangements. Changes focused on making quality more visible in decision-making, improving the flow of assurance and risk information, and aligning HEIW's approach with wider NHS Wales quality priorities.

| Board oversight | Executive oversight | System alignment |
|---|---|---|
| Revised agendas, consent agenda arrangements, Alert/ Advise/Assure highlight reports and twice-yearly progress updates strengthened the Board's ability to focus on quality, assurance and impact. | Revised reporting templates and Directorate Performance Reviews supported more consistent consideration of the Health and Care Quality Standards in planning, delivery and performance discussions. | Participation in NHS Wales quality networks, Safe Care Partnership work and regular engagement with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales supported shared learning and alignment with national quality priorities. |

## Managing Quality in Education and Training

We have a statutory responsibility to ensure learners have safe, effective and supportive environments where they can develop the knowledge and skills needed to deliver high-quality care.

- Our Postgraduate Medical, Primary Care, Dental and Pharmacy Deaneries under take the planning, commissioning and quality management of education and training in Wales aligned to regulatory standards

- The Optometry team commission and delivers postgraduate education, mentoring and professional development to optometrists enhancing the skills of optometrists including in support of increasing the availability of high-quality eye care in primary and community settings.

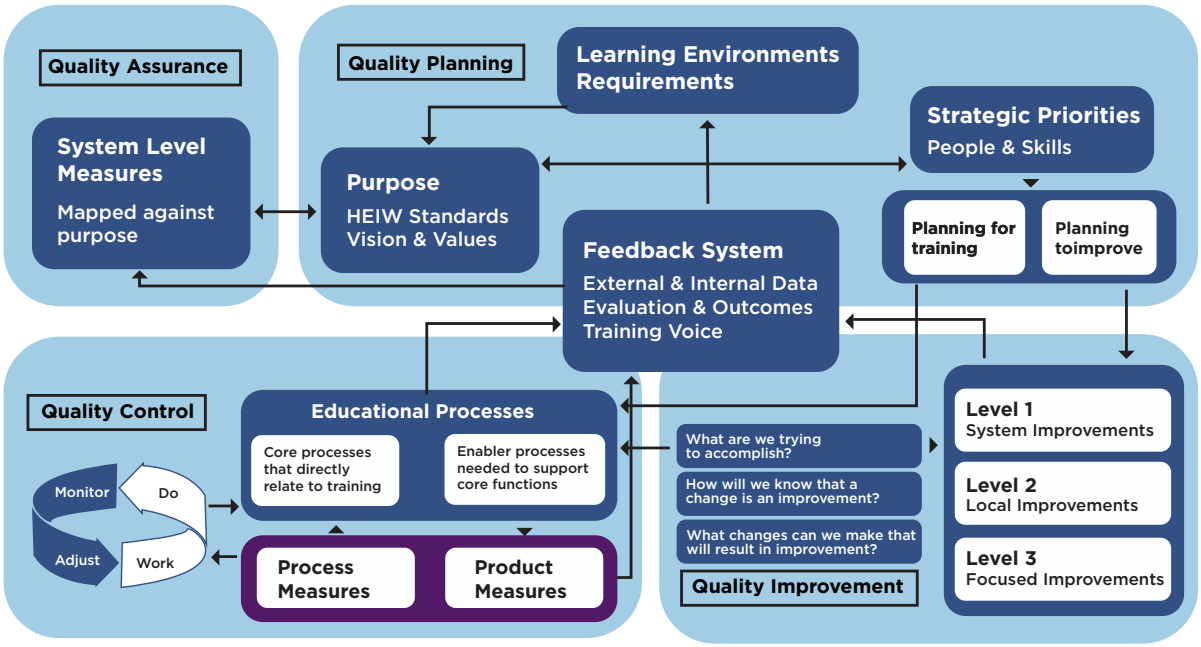
- Our Education Commissioning team commissions pre- and post-registration education and training for nurses, midwives, allied health professionals and healthcare scientists, with quality assurance embedded across all commissioned programmes. The team monitors provider performance, learner experience and placement quality, working with partners to identify, investigate, and manage quality issues and concerns through agreed governance routes.

- Our work-based learning team develops work-based learning education and apprenticeships to support a range of careers and we are the health apprenticeship framework partner of Medr.

We work with professional regulators and Awarding Bodies to align education and training with national standards, quality requirements and patient safety expectations.

# Quality Management System (QMS) for Education and Training Environments

The QMS has four connected domains: Quality Planning, Quality Improvement, Quality Control and Quality Assurance. The feedback system is central to the framework underpinning all other QMS components.




The HEIW QMS for education and training is well established in postgraduate medicine aligned to General Medical Council (GMC) standards and has received positive assurance from the GMC. This QMS has been embedded and strengthened for all education and training programmes aligned to a single set of standards based on the GMC standards. This provides a structured approach to planning, learning and improvement.

### Purpose of the HEIW Education and Training QMS:

"To continuously improve the quality of the learning environment and training experience, to ensure the education and training systems reliably and sustainably meet the requirements of the learners, trainers and patients in Wales."




QMS Framework taken from Developing a Quality Management System

Implementation of the QMS helps identify variation early, apply consistent metrics and focus support where improvement is needed.

The QIST (Quality Improvement Skills Training) programme equips healthcare professionals with skills to improve services, patient experience and outcomes.

# Governance of Education and Training Functions within HEIW

HEIW's education and training quality governance structure supports consistent oversight, escalation and learning.

The Quality Oversight Group receives feedback from all education and training functions, triangulates information obtained from different providers and professional groups and identifies common themes. Significant or persistent concerns are escalated to the Executive Team, while intelligence and examples of good practice are shared internally and with partners to support learning and improvement.

Profession-specific quality data is collected and managed by individual teams. Risks and updates are reported through Directorate Quality Groups, enabling triangulation within and across Directorates.

Revised and improved risk matrices have been introduced incorporating regulatory requirements and QMS structures which have strengthened cross directorate triangulation of data and information.

The Multiprofessional Placement Board and the Commissioned Education and Workplace Based Learning Group oversee risks within the Nursing, Health Professions and Quality Directorate, ensuring alignment with regulatory standards and QMS frameworks.

Standardised risks are triangulated across Directorates to identify provider, site, or programme-level themes requiring investigation or escalation to the HEIW Executive team via the Quality Oversight Group.

## Quality Monitoring in Education and Training

The Education Commissioning Quality Committee is a sub- committee of the Board and provides overarching oversight of education and training programmes.

Through our QMS, we work with universities, placement providers, NHS organisations and regulators to identify risks, monitor quality and support improvement.

Concerns are identified through student and trainee feedback, regulatory reports, reviews, recruitment and retention data, National Student Survey outcomes, placement evaluations and provider engagement.

At the end of 2025/26, 37 concerns were raised and escalated through targeted intervention with the education providers, where performance and quality were falling below our commissioners KPI targets or expectations. Seven fewer than the previous year.

**End of 2025/26**

**37** Concerns raised during the year

**↓7** Fewer compared to year before

## HEIW Overseen

| Over | Across | Across |
|---|---|---|
| **9,000** | **80** | **30** |
| Learners | Programmes | Professions |

We continue to work with education providers on programme improvement plans and targeted action. With HEIW overseeing over 9,000 learners on over 80 programmes across more than 30 professions, identification and management of 37 concerns provides assurance that the quality of provision is high, and also that issues are identified and managed.

## Postgraduate Medical Education – Quality Management

In postgraduate medical education, HEIW is responsible for quality management of all approved learning environments and is accountable to the General Medical Council who are responsible for quality assurance. HEIW work with training providers and the General Medical Council to ensure resident doctors train in environments that meet Promoting Excellence standards. Training quality is continuously monitored and a robust and proportionate approach to quality management is in place. Where training concerns cannot be resolved locally or are persistent HEIW will lead a Targeted Visit to facilitate improvement plans. In 2025/6 37 targeted visits took place across Wales.

Where concerns are escalating or not resolved and may affect training quality, patient safety, wellbeing or outcomes, the General Medical Council (working with HEIW) may place a programme into Enhanced Monitoring.

Enhanced Monitoring is the highest level of regulatory oversight. HEIW and the General Medical Council support organisations to address learning environment concerns through engagement, quality visits, progress reviews, action planning and monitoring.

At the end of 2025/26, four training areas in Wales were subject to enhanced monitoring, reduced from five earlier in the year. Areas in enhanced monitoring are supported by HEIW's oversight and action plan, and the progress of these action plans is central to escalation/de-escalation decisions.

The four areas remaining by April 2026 were in emergency medicine and reflect a range of challenges which continue to require focused attention.

## How do we listen to the learner voice?



**Learner Voice**

Learner (resident doctor, student and trainee) Voice provides important quality intelligence and informs improvement and strategic decision-making.



**Resident Medical Trainee Experience**

Resident doctor, Student and Trainee experience is central to the QMS and directly informs all four components of the framework.

### Components of the framework

**1 Quality Planning**

Identifying areas for improvement and prioritisation.

**2 Quality Control**

Monitoring variation and performance across education and training environments.

**3 Quality Assurance**

Providing evidence of standards, compliance, and effective oversight.

**4 Quality Improvement**

Driving continuous learning, innovation, and system-wide change.

Across professional areas, HEIW uses a layered approach to learner engagement. This combines national surveys and programme evaluations, structured trainee and student forums, representative groups, focus groups, complaints and concerns routes, and direct engagement through study days and curriculum review processes. These mechanisms provide both quantitative and qualitative insight and help ensure that learner experience is considered alongside wider quality, performance and regulatory information.

The approaches used across Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, the Wales Health Student Forum and Nursing and Health Professional education illustrate how learner feedback is gathered, triangulated and acted upon.

Examples include strengthened communication with resident doctors, “You said, we did” feedback loops, representative groups, focus groups with universities, and use of learner and educator feedback within commissioning, quality assurance and contract review. Together, these arrangements support openness, psychological safety, responsiveness and continuous improvement across learning environments.

To further support a culture of openness and transparency, we introduced a Speaking Up Safely Toolkit in 2024, which we continued to work to embed.

This toolkit helps learners recognise when something does not feel right, or when they have concerns, and to raise these confidently through appropriate routes. This reinforces an organisational culture where speaking up is encouraged, supported and acted upon.



# Looking back on 2025/26

**Example:**
Quality-focused work to Support Education and Training Quality

# Example: Quality-focused work to Support Education and Training Quality

The following are examples to show how the Duty of Quality is being applied across different functions. Each example illustrates either strengthened assurance, improved capability, better use of evidence, increased access, or direct support for service improvement.



HEIW delivered the Medical Focused Supporting Training Excellence in Medical Education (STEME) conference to provide essential CPD for the trainer cohort, as well as providing a forum for sharing best practice and innovative and improved training opportunities. This programme receives excellent feedback and is over subscribed.



The Revalidation Support Unit delivered a 3D (Discovering, Developing and Delivering in Healthcare) Programme. The 25/26 cohort presented 27 improvement projects demonstrating clinical leadership and quality improvement activity across NHS Wales.

The Unit also delivered a multi professional diabetes training programme, bringing together staff from 11 practices to share quality improvement projects, promote peer learning and support improvements in patient care. This Programme supports the development of both leadership capacity and capability relevant to both health care training and delivery.



We strengthened coordination of workforce development, education, training and continuing professional development through the establishment of the Primary Care Deanery. This has improved collaboration across the multi-professional primary care workforce, supporting a more joined-up approach to learning and development and reducing duplication of effort.



Continued to strengthen independent assurance and external scrutiny through our Lay Representative programme.

Following the successful recruitment of 12 additional Lay Representatives in late 2024, the pool increased to 33 members, providing greater capacity to support quality management, governance and decision-making activities across the organisation. The recruitment process also improved the diversity of the cohort, broadening representation across age and ethnic backgrounds and supporting our commitment to inclusion, equality and the involvement of diverse perspectives across our work.

**In Late 2024**

**12** Additional Lay Representatives recruited

**33** Total number after recruitment

In recent years concerns have been highlighted around the quality of maternity and neonatal services leading to adverse patient outcomes. In response to concerns in Wales (and a specific report regarding Swansea Bay UHB) the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care announced an all-Wales assurance assessment of maternity and neonatal services. Considering these concerns, we reviewed our own associated educational quality and training programmes in relation to maternity and neonatal services. Whilst the existing approach is robust, a series of improvement actions have been identified. This includes an improved approach to quality data triangulation across the organisation, improved sharing of data between organisations and the establishment of a Quality Oversight Group to strengthen governance structure and collaboration across Directorates.



**Swansea Bay University Health Board**

During 2025/26 there were some specific areas of challenge between demand and supply affecting graduate employment capacity for our commissioned education programmes, in particular adult nursing in the Swansea area and paramedics. This was resolved through collaborative work with NHS colleagues to find innovative solutions. As a result of this work HEIW has identified the need to strengthen our partnership work through a more nationally coordinated and proactive approach to education and training commissioning and employment, that reflects local, regional and national perspectives.

The establishment of a Workforce Supply Oversight Group by HEIW in February 2026 is supporting NHS Wales organisations to make full and timely provision for graduates and share best practice and innovative solutions. This group brings together senior decision-making leaders from across NHS Wales to review data, identify risks early, and take timely mitigating action.

## Continuing to embed the duty of quality within our organisational culture

This work is intended to move the Duty of Quality from awareness into everyday improvement practice, supporting staff to identify quality issues, use evidence, test improvements and share learning across teams.

During 2025/26, we focused on building awareness, confidence and practical application across teams.

- Established and delivered a programme of duty of quality awareness sessions to 192 (38%) of our staff. Additional resources promoting quality included a Duty of Quality e-learning module and a dedicated Quality page included on the HEIW staff intranet, providing accessible guidance, tools and resources to help staff apply quality principles in day-to-day work.

- Quality clinics delivered to Directorates, strengthening the understanding of quality principles, and embedding quality considerations into planning, delivery and evaluation.

## Developing our Quality Management System (QMS)

Continued development of the QMS is intended to provide a more consistent and systematic way to identify variation, triangulate intelligence, prioritise action and support improvement. We have strengthened this approach by embedding common structures, improvement capability and governance routes across functions.

- The QMS is established across key education and training functions and is being strengthened through more consistent operationalisation across Medical, Dental, Pharmacy, Optometry, Nursing and Health Professional education. In 2026/27, this approach will be further refined and extended to other HEIW functions, including Leadership and Succession, Future Workforce, Workforce Planning, Workforce Transformation and Digital, to support greater consistency in quality planning, assurance, improvement and reporting.

- In 2025/26, 471 participants completed QIST training across the Fundamentals of Improvement and Improvement in Practice modules, with consistently positive feedback.

- QIST also hosted the HEIW National Learning Event in February 2026, sharing quality improvement learning and innovation from across Wales. The programme continues to strengthen improvement capability and leadership across the workforce.

- The Quality Oversight Group has been established to support the QMS by triangulating quality data across education and training functions, identifying common themes, risks and opportunities for improvement, and strengthening cross-directorate oversight. This will continue to be refined in 2026/27 as the QMS is further embedded and operationalised.

- Participating in NHS Executive's Safe Care Partnership QMS workstream, building on the principles set out Developing a Quality Management System, delivered in partnership with Q, The Health Foundation and the Quality Improvement Clinic with planned Board development sessions to strengthen QMS approaches. This programme, running to 2027, will further influence organisational quality culture. We are represented by senior leaders across quality, planning and education, aligned to our role and functions.

- A developing programme of work is underway to redesign the Joint Strategic Education and Training (JSET) meetings held with individual Health Boards and Trusts as a more strategic, multi professional component of HEIW's Quality Management System. The revised approach moves beyond the traditional commissioning model and aims to provide a consistent all-Wales framework for Executive-level discussion on education quality, learning environments, workforce priorities, innovation, and financial stewardship. The approach will continue to be refined through stakeholder engagement and working group activity, with the first cycle of JSET meetings scheduled to take place during 2026. The meetings will provide a key mechanism for reviewing education and training quality, identifying strategic risks and opportunities, and agreeing priorities for improvement with Health Boards and Trusts across Wales.

Continuous improvement extends beyond education and training into all areas of HEIW. We have set out some examples to show how directorate and corporate programmes are applying the Health and Care Quality Standards through measurable change, learning, capability-building and system-wide improvement (Appendix 1).

## Strengthening how we listen and respond to learner voices

Strengthening learner voice is central to a quality improvement approach, used for assurance, and to identify themes, test responses and inform changes to education and training.

- Introduced a learner and student stories programme for the Board, providing a structured platform for sharing experiences and highlighting key themes in education, training and workforce support. Contributions over the year have provided valuable insights to the lived experience of learners undertaking a range of programmes and are helping inform improvements in education and training.

- Themes from students, trainees and learners were reported to the Board through a combination of standing committee, performance reports and programme specific papers. Board agendas have been strengthened to include more explicit consideration of student, trainee and learner voice, responding to Audit Wales 2024 Structured Assessment recommendation.

- The Board receives highlight reports from the Education Commissioning and Quality Committee, which escalate key issues identified through learner feedback, including National Student Survey results, training environment concerns and risks to programme quality.

- The ECQC Annual Report, provided a retrospective summary of themes discussed at the Committee, including placement experience, learner satisfaction, recruitment and attrition trends, and quality concerns identified through national and local surveys Collectively, these reports ensured the Board was informed of recurring themes relating to learner experience, inclusivity, sustainability and impact, strengthening HEIW's ability to capture diverse student insight by providing a flexible, inclusive approach, enabling students to engage at varying levels through student-led working groups and priority focused activities. Over 300 students have registered, significantly widening reach.

- We reinstated a revised national student forum which prioritises inclusivity, sustainability and impact, strengthening HEIW's ability to capture diverse student insight by providing a flexible, inclusive approach, enabling students to engage at varying levels through student led working groups and priority focused activities. Over 300 students have registered.

## Evaluation of the Quality of our Work

Evaluation provides an important feedback loop for quality improvement, helping HEIW understand whether its systems and programmes are having the intended effect and where further action is needed.

We use audit, survey and review findings to test whether our arrangements are effective, identify areas for improvement and track the actions being taken in response.

# Audit reports

### Audit Wales

The Audit Wales Structured Assessment reviewed HEIW's governance and use of resources. The report concluded that HEIW understands its operating environment, has a strong focus on medium- and long-term workforce needs, robust governance, planning and financial arrangements. The report made three recommendations on learner experience information, Board Development Sessions and communication about financial pressures and workforce sustainability. In response we have strengthened governance, triangulation and escalation of learner feedback, improved Board development arrangements, and continue work on stakeholder communication.

During the year Audit Wales also completed a Securing Value from Commissioned Education Places audit to assess how HEIW assesses and secures value for money when it invests in education and training.

The audit found our planning and contracting approach adds value for students and NHS Wales but needed to strengthen how we assess and communicate the impact and value of education investments.

We are implementing the recommendations by strengthening the value for money framework and producing an annual report evaluating each academic cycle.

We are committed to strengthening our approach to ensure evaluation methods are more robust and systematic and place a greater emphasis on understanding and evidencing the impact of our work.

## Internal Audit

In 2025/26, a risk-based audit programme was delivered, and reported to the Audit and Assurance Committee to support improvement. The finding confirmed the Board could take substantial assurance that arrangements to secure governance, risk management and internal control, were suitably designed and applied effectively.

The Duty of Quality internal audit was completed and presented to the Audit and Assurance Committee in July 2025. The audit received substantial assurance and raised one recommendation in relation to all staff attending a duty of quality staff awareness session. We have implemented this recommendation into the Duty of Quality training programme and embedded in both Performance Appraisal and Development Review (PADR) training and inductions for our staff.

Our Revalidation Support Unit received a Substantial Assurance opinion from Internal Audit, providing assurance that governance, quality assurance and control arrangements were operating effectively, with no matters identified for reporting.

## Health Inspectorate Wales (HIW)

Quarterly partnership meetings are held with HIW. We have revised our Memorandum of Understanding to reflect recognition of the mutual benefit from sharing intelligence at the HIW Summit meetings and regular partnership meetings.



# NHS Wales Staff survey

We manage the NHS Wales Staff Survey on behalf of NHS Wales, commissioned by Welsh Government and the Welsh Partnership Forum. The annual survey captures workforce experience, supports targeted improvement and provides national and local insight.

**In 2025**

**34,645**
NHS Wales Staff responded to Survey

Represents **30%** of workforce

**21%**
Increase from responses in 2024

**Within HEIW**

**446** Staff completed Survey in total

**92.9%**
Response Rate of Staff

Areas for future focus include workforce pressures, engagement, staff feedback and career development. Each Directorate has a staff survey lead, supported by the HEIW staff survey working group to support local areas of improvement.

You can read more about the NHS Wales Staff Survey on our website.

## Complaints, Concerns and Risks

Complaints, concerns and risks provide important quality intelligence. We have used this intelligence to strengthen complaint handling, identify learning and improve how risks and concerns are monitored.

Our Complaints Handling Policy provides a framework for managing complaints and concerns, supporting timely resolution, effective monitoring and organisational learning.

**Over the last 3 Years**

**7**
Complaints in 2023/24

**20**
Complaints in 2024/25

**25**
Complaints in 2025/26

There has been an increase in complaints over the past 3 years, rising from 7 complaints in 2023/24 to 20 in 2024/25 and 25 in 2025/26. This increase placed additional demand on the complaints process and has contributed to challenges in achieving response timescales. We have increased capacity within our Corporate Governance team to support improvements in the timeliness of handling complaints.

Of the 25 complaints received this year 14 were responded to within policy timescales.

Three main themes were identified:



**Graduate role opportunities**
including physician associates, genetic counsellors and nursing.



**Funding allocations and processes**
including expenses and travel funds.



**Codi**
The implementation of the new integrated digital system (Codi) designed to support the management of resident doctors and postgraduate professionals across NHS Wales.

We view complaints as an opportunity to improve by learning lessons which in 25/26 included the need for clearer, more timely communication, better visibility of training opportunities, stronger pastoral support and clearer guidance for learners. Processes were strengthened to track actions and learning from complaints.

The annual Complaints Handling Policy report was considered by the Audit and Assurance Committee with complaints also monitored through performance reporting.

Following a Welsh Government review, Putting Things Right regulations were replaced by the Listening to People process from 1 April 2026. We will update our Complaints Handling Policy during 2026/27.

## Speaking up safely (SUS)

Speaking Up Safely supports a learning culture by helping staff, trainees and students raise concerns early, enabling issues to be understood, responded to and used to inform wider improvement.

We have continued to embed this approach through communications, digital routes, governance and partnership working.

The Speaking Up Safely Framework supports a culture where staff, trainees and students can raise concerns confidently, knowing they will be listened to and acted on appropriately.

Throughout the year we continued to embed Speaking Up Safely through communications, engagement and culture change, with most actions completed or on track.

Key developments included:

- Continued delivery of a targeted SUS communications and engagement campaign, aimed at raising awareness among staff, trainees and students. This included updates to induction programmes, reaching over 3,000 students, and the development of supporting resources such as videos and toolkits.

- Introduced a new digital functionality to support speaking up, including the rollout of a "Working in Confidence" platform, enabling individuals to raise concerns anonymously.

- Expansion of arrangements for learners, including the launch of an anonymous reporting platform for trainees and improved signposting through QR codes and digital access routes.

- Strengthening partnership working with Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), including agreement that HEI's will provide regular high-level information on concerns raised by students, particularly in relation to bullying, harassment and equality issues.

- Progress towards enhanced safeguarding arrangements, including development of access to a dedicated safeguarding team to support staff and learners.

Governance has been strengthened through the Speaking Up Safely Task and Finish Group, Board oversight and an Independent Member Champion. Regular monitoring helps identify and address concerns, themes and risks.

## Corporate Risk Register

The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by the Audit and Assurance Committee and every two months by the Board. Key risks managed during 2025/26 included:

- Cyber Security and Resilience.
- Higher Education Institutions achieving commissioning levels.
- Supporting the Physician Associate role.
- Cardiff University Nursing Provision – Consultation outcome.
- Codi implementation and launch.
- Role vacancies for graduates.
- Education and Training Plan 2026-27 funding.
- Data and Analytics team capacity and capability.
- Implementation of the Prioritisation Act for Postgraduate medical recruitment.

Further information is available in the Board papers on HEIW's website.

The Board remains committed to ensuring staff can assess, manage, escalate and report risk. Risk management training for our managers continued throughout 2025/26.

# Equality, Inclusion and Welsh Language

Equality, inclusion and Welsh language are core to quality improvement because they help identify where access, experience or outcomes may vary and where targeted action is needed to make services and learning environments more equitable and person-centred.

We have used our equality, inclusion and Welsh language work to strengthen representation, improve access and support more responsive education and workforce services.

Equality, diversity and inclusion underpin all our work. HEIW continues to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities and support national priorities including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, LGBT Q+ Action Plan and Workforce Race Equality Standard.

The Duty of Quality includes the Welsh language, recognising that access to Welsh language services can improve people's experience, wellbeing and outcomes.

**Equality and inclusion**

**17%** Of new recruits from an ethnic minority

**4** Of existing cohert under 44 yrs old

The appointment of additional Lay Representatives, referenced earlier in relation to independent assurance and external scrutiny, also supported HEIW's commitment to equality and inclusion by broadening representation within the Lay Representative pool. Of those who provided EDI monitoring data, 17% of new recruits declared that they were from an ethnic minority background, compared with 0% of the existing cohort, and four recruits reported that they were under 44. This followed targeted work to enhance diversity, including reviewing the application process and increasing role remuneration.

HEIW continues to operate under the Welsh Language Act 1993 and its approved Welsh Language Scheme. Work is underway to transition to Welsh Language Standards compliance from 1st October 2026.

Demand for Welsh language services increased during the year, with over 5.3 million words translated and interpreting provided for 98 events, more than double the previous year.

There has also been progress in understanding Welsh language skills across the workforce. Language skills profile completion increased to 89% of core staff, with 12% identifying as proficient Welsh speakers.

## Welsh Language Services Demand

**5.3 Million**
Words translated from English by HEIW

**98**
Events attended for Welsh support

## Welsh Language skills within HEIW

**89%**
Core staff with Welsh language skills

**12%**
of staff identify as proficient Welsh speakers

More Than Just Words remains a key focus. Activity during the year included:

- Establishment of a national MTJW network (77 delegates), alongside targeted learning events and a national conference delivered in partnership with Welsh Government, attended by over 100 delegates, to share good practice and build capability.

- The Gofalu trwy'r Gymraeg Phrasebook launched to support the workforce in using simple, practical Welsh phrases in everyday clinical and educational settings. It aims to build confidence and normalise the use of Welsh across patient interactions, contributing to improving quality and experience through language choice.

- Wider adoption of a Welsh language workforce planning tool, now embedded within national health policy and influencing Welsh Government strategies, including the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy (April 2025), supporting a shift towards planned provision based on language need.

- The Welsh Health Students Forum, referenced earlier in relation to strengthening learner voice, also supports Welsh language and inclusion by raising awareness among future healthcare professionals and embedding the Welsh language as a core component of education and training.

Our proactive approach to Welsh language provision, aims to help services become more equitable, person-centred and responsive to Welsh-speaking communities.



# Duty of Quality in our Directorates and Work Programmes

We have many examples of how the Duty of Quality is being embedded in practice. These examples demonstrate how this contributes to quality improvement across NHS Wales and are organised around four broad themes: building capability for quality improvement, using intelligence to target action, strengthening workforce supply and access, and supporting safer, more person-centred care.

## Building Capability for Quality Improvement

A sustainable culture of quality improvement depends on leaders, educators and staff having the skills, confidence and support needed to identify opportunities for improvement, test new approaches and embed learning into practice.

During 2025/26, HEIW continued to strengthen improvement capability through leadership development, research, quality improvement training and simulation-based learning. Examples include the Aspiring Chief Executive Programme, Aspiring Executive Director Talent Pool and NHS Wales Graduate Management Programme, which are helping to build future leadership capacity and succession planning across NHS Wales.

Improvement capability was further supported through the QIST programme and National Learning Event, which continue to develop quality improvement skills across professions and organisations. The PRIORITY II programme strengthened research capability, while the Clinical Skills and Simulation Academy continued work towards a national approach to simulation education and faculty development.

Alongside these initiatives, the National Supervision Hub and HEIW's AI learning resources have expanded access to practical tools and learning opportunities that support reflective practice, evidence-based decision making and continuous improvement.

Together, these programmes strengthen the leadership, improvement, research and learning capability needed to sustain quality improvement across NHS Wales.

## Using Intelligence to Plan, Target and Improve

Improvement requires timely, reliable intelligence to understand variation, identify risks, anticipate future need and target interventions where they will have the greatest impact.

We strengthened the use of workforce intelligence, modelling and analytical insight through several national programmes. The Workforce Planning Hub improved access to workforce planning tools, training and resources, while the Data and Analytics Portal enhanced access to consistent workforce intelligence and reporting.

Targeted work to improve healthcare science workforce data quality and the development of the first all-Wales Pharmacy Workforce Map have strengthened understanding of workforce supply, distribution and future need. The Strategic Nursing Workforce Plan has similarly supported workforce stability, retention and placement capacity using workforce modelling and intelligence.

These programmes improve the evidence base for decision making, helping NHS Wales identify workforce risks earlier, allocate resources more effectively and align workforce development with population need.

## Strengthening Workforce Supply, Access and Service Resilience

A key contribution that HEIW makes to quality is ensuring services have access to a workforce with the skills, capacity and flexibility needed to meet current and future demand.

During 2025/26, this included continued expansion of practice-based learning opportunities, particularly within primary and community care settings, helping to broaden placement opportunities and support future workforce supply. Workforce supply was also strengthened through the Dental Workforce Plan and initiatives supporting locally employed doctors, which focus on reducing workforce inequalities and improving access to development opportunities.

Service resilience has further been supported through programmes such as optometry independent prescribing expansion, the Perioperative Workforce Programme and the Endoscopy Academy of Wales. These initiatives increase workforce capability in key priority areas while helping organisations respond to service pressures, improve productivity and enhance patient access.

The establishment of the Workforce Supply Oversight Group strengthened the system's ability to identify workforce supply risks early, to support co-ordinated actions across NHS Wales. Collectively, this work is supporting development of a more sustainable workforce, improving access to education and development opportunities, and is strengthening the resilience of services across NHS Wales.

## Supporting Safer and More Person-Centred Care

Ultimately, HEIW's education, training and workforce development activity is intended to support safer, more effective and more person-centred services for the people of Wales.

Examples during 2025/26 included implementation of the Perinatal Core Competency Framework, which helps reduce variation in maternity and neonatal services through consistent standards and competency assessment. Work to develop the All-Wales Palliative and End of Life Care Competency Framework similarly supports a consistent approach to compassionate, person-centred care across settings.

Low Vision Training has strengthened specialist capability and collaboration across professional and third-sector partners, while the Optimising Patient Flow Hub has supported shared learning and practical improvement approaches aimed at improving patient flow and reducing delays. HEIW's compassionate leadership work continues to support the cultural conditions needed for high-quality, person-centred care.

Together, these examples demonstrate how our work in education, workforce development, leadership and service improvement activity contribute directly to safer care, improved experience and better outcomes for patients and communities.



# Looking forward to 2026/27

# Looking forward to 2026/27

In 2026/27, HEIW will continue embedding the Duty of Quality and strengthening the systems, processes and culture that support it. Our focus will be:

## 1 Embed the Quality Management System across HEIW

Expand implementation beyond education and training into corporate and operational functions, supported by aligned governance, standardised QA processes and organisation-wide training.

## 2 Strengthen data, reporting and insight

Develop a unified Quality Management Database and dashboards to enable "always-on" reporting, improved data visualisation, and alignment with organisation reporting processes.

## 3 Enhance learner voice and engagement

Implement a Learner Engagement Framework, strengthen triangulation of feedback, and expand use of learner insights across Board and directorate decision-making.

## 4 Align HEIW Duty of Quality Approach with national quality priorities

Align HEIW's quality objectives and measures with the National Patient Safety Plan and emerging national frameworks, such as the Quality Outcomes Framework, while continuing to contribute to the NHS Wales Performance and Improvement Safe Care Partnership to inform and strengthen our local quality work programme.

## 5 Align education and CPD strategies with the QMS

Ensure HEIW's Education Strategy and Continuing Professional Development Strategy align with the Quality Management System and support consistent quality standards.

## 6 Develop more efficient ways of working

Deliver the Ways of Working programme within HEIW to streamline governance, reduce duplication and maximise the value of digital systems and hybrid working models.

## 7 Strengthen quality capability and culture

Embed Duty of Quality in staff induction, continue awareness and development programmes, and support consistent application of the Health and Care Quality Standards.

# Conclusion

Quality is at the heart of everything we do. It underpins our responsibility to learners, educators, partners and the people of Wales, ensuring the healthcare workforce is equipped with the knowledge, skills and support needed to deliver safe, effective and compassionate care. Our approach is founded on continuous improvement, robust governance, and a culture that values learning, collaboration and innovation.

The report provides assurance to our Board, our partners and the public that we have robust systems in place to monitor, manage and enhance quality across all aspects of our work.

We remain committed to listening to learners, educators, patients, partners and our own staff, using evidence and insight to shape future improvements and ensuring that we continue to meet the expectations placed upon us as a national organisation.

In 2026/27, we will build on the progress made to date by embedding the QMS more widely, strengthening data and insight, aligning with national quality priorities, and improving how we capture and respond to learner and stakeholder feedback. Partnership remains fundamental to our success and together, we are building a workforce that is resilient, adaptable and able to meet future challenges while maintaining the highest standards of care.

We hope you have found this overview of the progress made throughout 2025/26 in embedding the Duty of Quality helpful.

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