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Y Weithrediaeth
Executive



Strategic Workforce Plan for Primary Care 2024/25 - 2029 /30

Summary - April 2024



Introduction

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) and the Strategic Programme for Primary Care (SPPC) have jointly developed a Strategic Workforce Plan for Primary Care (SWPPC) with partners across Wales.

The plan aligns with '[A Healthier Wales](#)' and will support the implementation of the [Primary Care Model for Wales](#). The plan will be implemented over the next five years starting in 2024/25 by HEIW working in partnership with the Strategic Programme and key stakeholders.

The plan covers the workforce providing primary care services at a local, cluster or other geographical footprint. This includes those delivered by independent contractors, managed primary care services and staff employed by health boards across the 24/7 period. The plan also includes a focus on people working in services that support people within health inclusion groups.

Case for change

A workforce plan for primary care was originally developed by Welsh Government in 2015. Since its establishment in 2018 HEIW has prioritised the development of the primary care workforce in the following areas;

- ❏ **Increased workforce supply** for a number of professional groups including GP trainees, pharmacy trainees and dental trainees.
- ❏ Establishment of a new **multi-professional education and training framework** with a central HEIW hub working alongside seven health board academies to support education and training across the multi professional workforce in primary and community care.
- ❏ **New education programmes** including the first national General Practice Nurse Foundation Programme; a dental nurse training programme; investment in higher qualifications for optometrists to support redesigned eye care pathways; a significant expansion in independent prescribing and a training programme for pharmacists which underpins the roll out of new community pharmacy services.
- ❏ Supporting **new workforce models** to support prudent working such as the introduction of physician associate roles, extended roles for pharmacy technicians and social prescribers/care navigators working in primary care.

However much has changed since 2015 and given the increasing sustainability issues within primary care, a new plan was needed.

Despite a growth in the workforce in primary care, challenges remain, and primary care is experiencing difficulties in responding to an increase in demand and complexity, but at the same time public dissatisfaction with the NHS is growing with challenges in meeting the expectations of citizens.

Demographic changes are impacting on the demand for care and the range of services and skills needed in primary care to care for an ageing population particularly as the number of people living with multiple long-term conditions is projected to increase significantly over the next 10 years.

Technological and scientific advances offer significant potential to reshape healthcare delivery, particularly in terms of digital technologies and data science and our workforce will need skills to adapt to this rapidly changing environment.

Against this backdrop there is a need to develop a workforce plan and to consider how to stabilise, renew and transform to build a sustainable workforce model fit for future generations.

How we developed the plan

The plan was developed using HEIW's three pillar approach which includes research and best practice, a review of available workforce intelligence and the delivery of an extensive engagement and consultation period with key stakeholders across primary care.

Research and good practice

Published reviews, articles, reports, and other material produced by a wide range of bodies including professional bodies, think tanks, policy documents and academia were reviewed as part of the development of this plan. The research recognised the importance of multi-professional team-based models of care where professionals work together to improve both quality, access and efficiency of care.

Factors such as excessive workload, burnout, and a shortage of primary care workforce contribute to this challenge. Key themes include:

- High quality patient care, delivered by multi-professional teams working in partnership with citizens to delivery safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable and patient-centred care.
- The importance of considering multiple factors that contribute to workforce well-being in humanistic workforce planning.
- The impact of technological advancements in enabling new approaches.
- The need for investment to address workforce challenges.
- The necessity of long-term planning for the future workforce.

Data and analytics

Available sources of workforce intelligence across the primary care system in Wales were reviewed. Despite limited sources of data and intelligence for some elements of primary care, the following key workforce challenges were identified:

General Medical Services	General Dental Services
There is a decline in partnership arrangements and a lack of clear succession plans and development programmes for practice managers and practice nurses. As well as challenges in recruiting and retaining non-clinical administrative and other support staff.	There are significant workforce gaps across dentistry with geographical variations. The delivery of NHS services is vulnerable due to contractual changes and wider economic pressures. These have been explored through the Strategic dental workforce plan .

Urgent primary care	Nursing
Demands on these services are significant and workforce sustainability was a key theme in the Peer Review Annual Report 2023 with the attraction and retaining senior clinical workforce a common theme.	The age profile of General Practice Nurses (GPNs) is a concern with around 50% of the 1,400 GPNs in Wales aged over 50. A lack of a career pathway and development opportunities impacts on recruitment and retention of primary care nursing.
Optometry	Pharmacy
There are fewer workforce challenges in optometry however there is a lack of training capacity within primary care optometry.	Workforce pressures within pharmaceutical services have been explored through the Strategic Pharmacy Workforce Plan.
Inclusion health	
In March 2021, the Senedd Health and Social Care Committee published its report following an inquiry on Welsh prisoner’s experience of health and social care in adult settings. The report highlighted that there are recruitment and retention challenges in respect of the prison health and social care workforces.	

Engagement

Extensive engagement took place from March 2023 to July 2023 and over 1500 people across primary care took part in discussions that included 13 national and local engagement events, dedicated webinars and drop-in-sessions, 90 stakeholder meetings and a dedicated poll which received over 120 responses. Key messages derived from the [engagement and consultation](#) include:

- 🔗 **Retention, workload, and wellbeing** – engagement highlighted the lack of emphasis on retention across primary care with factors such as workload, stress and exhaustion considered crucial reasons for people for leaving the workforce.
- 🔗 **A focus on prevention** – prioritising population health there is a need to consider service and workforce models that will best meet future needs.
- 🔗 **Infrastructure** - lack of physical space hampers effective working/training and poses a risk to future recruitment. Creative solutions and investment are needed to address these issues.

Following the engagement phase, key actions were developed and tested via a five-week consultation in the summer of 2023. Responses were received from organisations including health boards, professional bodies as well as individuals working within primary care and other key stakeholders. There was significant support for the range of actions proposed.

Primary care vision

A vision has been developed and refined with stakeholders which can be found below. It reflects the key messages from process:

The next 10 years: Our vision for the primary care workforce



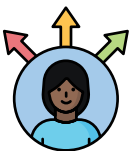
People will be supported by multi-professional teams working together to deliver holistic and integrated care



People will benefit from a consistent range of services available in primary care, with the size and shape of the workforce reflecting local population health needs delivering equitable outcomes



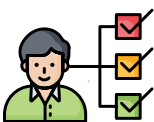
Technology and the use of data will play a bigger role and will help to deliver accessible, high quality care that is targeted at the needs of people



People will be attracted to work in primary care and will have choice and flexibility to develop along their career pathway with access to high-quality education and training



Our workforce will deliver care that applies across a broad and holistic perspective to people's needs focussing on prevention, care and treatment



Our workforce will have a greater range of skills available and will be supported to develop to meet the needs of their communities



Our workforce will be supported to deploy their extended skills across a range of settings, blending work and lifestyle choices

Key actions

The plan identifies [twenty-six key actions](#) to be delivered over a five-year period which are aligned with the themes of the [Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy](#). These interdependent themes are based on evidence of what supports the development of a sustainable workforce, with workforce wellbeing at the heart of all of them. The specific primary care actions in this plan are based on output from the engagement but also informed by research and workforce intelligence.

Key	An engaged, healthy and motivated workforce	Seamless workforce models	Workforce supply and shape	Excellent education and learning
	Attraction and recruitment	Leadership and succession	Building a digitally ready workforce	Additional actions
Action	Description of actions			
1	Measuring staff experience, engagement and wellbeing in primary care.			
2	Supporting staff who are new to primary including those who are newly qualified.			
3	Produce supervision guidance to support multi-professional teams whilst developing a programme to upskill the workforce in supervision practice.			
4	Map out a range of staff benefits that are currently not available to primary care staff and to explore potential to expand access.			
5	Develop and launch a national communication campaign for citizens to aid understanding of the multi-professional workforce.			
6	Support primary care employers in understanding individual professional's scopes of practice, regulatory and supervisory requirements.			
7	Embed new roles in primary care that support population health and wellbeing.			
8	Improve workforce planning in primary care to develop a sustainable pipeline of workforce.			
9	Aligned with the national retention programme establish a task and finish group to explore retention issues across primary care.			
10	Increase the number of apprenticeships in primary health services and expand the number of people recruited through the apprenticeship route.			
11	Develop sustainable GP workforce solutions, encouraging the workforce to take up partnership/salaried roles and decreasing reliance on locums.			
12	Explore the feasibility of establishing a specialist bank system for staff working in primary care.			
13	Improve Access to Education and Training for the current workforce.			
14	Develop our future workforce by expanding education and training provision in primary care.			

Key	An engaged, healthy and motivated workforce	Seamless workforce models	Workforce supply and shape	Excellent education and learning
	Attraction and recruitment	Leadership and succession	Building a digitally ready workforce	Additional actions
Action	Description of actions			
15	Increase opportunities for different models e.g. rotational roles, career portfolio models and flexible working across the multi-professional workforce.			
16	Review current incentive schemes to attract and recruit people into primary care.			
17	Actively promote careers in primary care to attract our future workforce ensuring primary care is considered within an all-age Careers Strategy.			
18	Provide equitable access to national leadership programmes for our senior primary care workforce.			
19	Continue to offer a bespoke leaderships programme for cluster leads and Collaborative leads further developing the leadership offer for leads.			
20	Create a Clinical Fellowship in health inequalities/population health to identify actions that should be embedded in pre/post registration programmes.			
21	Develop and deliver professional leadership solutions for primary care that align with the leadership strategy for health and care in Wales.			
22	Consider the digital roadmap for primary care to assess implications on future workforce requirements including education and training.			
23	Roll out the new HEIW digital competency tool in primary care identifying any training and education requirements.			
24	Improve access to immersive technologies for the workforce during their healthcare education and development in Wales.			
25	Promote the availability of Welsh language training to all staff within primary care whilst developing sustainable training and recruitment plans.			
26	Support under-represented and socially disadvantaged groups in accessing primary care careers through HEIW widening access programme.			

Benefits

Delivery of this comprehensive plan will achieve benefits to citizens, the primary care workforce and to health boards and employers and are all key to embedding the Primary Care Model for Wales. Benefits include:

- ✧ The delivery of holistic, timely, integrated care by multi-professional teams who can meet local community needs.
- ✧ Increased time for teaching, training, service improvement and research.
- ✧ Clear career pathways, progression routes and more flexible working (apprenticeships, portfolio careers).
- ✧ Consistently high-quality training with more access to primary care placements.
- ✧ Improved recruitment and retention in primary care.
- ✧ Achieving the quadruple aim: high quality, improved outcomes and experience, better value healthcare, and an engaged workforce.
- ✧ Enhanced primary care workforce in Wales with clinical, educational, research, and leadership skills.



Implementation

The actions identified in this plan will be delivered over a five-year period recognising the need for capacity and resources to support. An implementation plan will follow.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all who contributed to the engagement and consultation stages during 2023 and for your valuable contribution to the development of this plan. We look forward to your continued contribution in supporting implementation plans and the realisation of the ambition of this plan.

The NHS is nothing without the people who work within it. We are grateful for the hard work of our primary care teams who work tirelessly to support the citizens of Wales.



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