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Our Ref: AH/SE/cw

Date: 18 August 2022

Russell George MS  
Chair  
Health & Social Care Committee

Sent via email: [SeneddHealth@senedd.wales](mailto:SeneddHealth@senedd.wales)

Dear Mr George

## **MENTAL HEALTH WORKFORCE PLAN: UPDATE**

Thank you for your letter dated 14<sup>th</sup> July 2022. We are pleased to provide a response to the questions raised by the Committee and to update you on progress in developing a Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan for Wales.

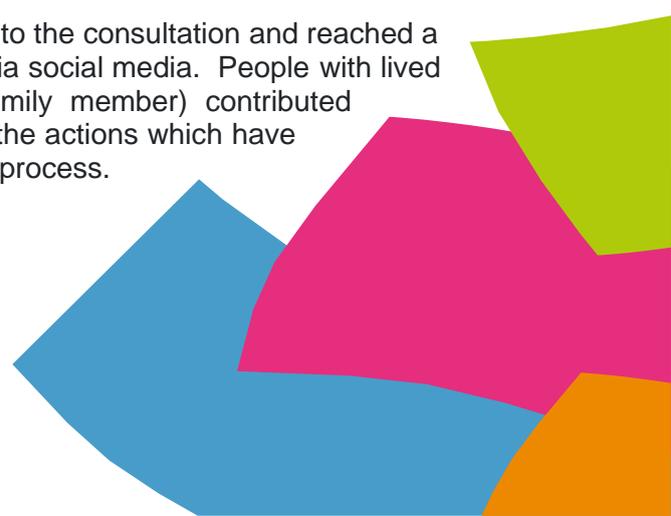
It may be helpful for us to share some context for the development of the Workforce Plan. Together for Mental Health (T4MH) made a commitment to develop a Strategic Mental Health Workforce Plan which we subsequently prioritised as an action within the broader Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care which was published in October 2020. In our view the case for change was already clear, and we were keen to contribute to the development of a sustainable workforce which can respond effectively to people's mental health needs across the continuum of care.

We started to develop the plan in the Autumn of 2020 and began with a large-scale virtual engagement and listening exercise with a range of stakeholders including those with lived experience of mental health, our workforce, local authorities, professional bodies, Health Board, third sector partners and care providers.

A two-phase approach was agreed with Welsh Government:

- Phase 1: a plan of work to respond to urgent workforce priorities.
- Phase 2: a longer-term plan for the Mental Health workforce with a focus on enhancing the role of the wider workforce, recruitment and retention in key roles, and developing an agile workforce to respond to changing mental health needs.

We are pleased that we received nearly 300 written responses to the consultation and reached a significant number of people through consultation events and via social media. People with lived experience of mental health (as an individual, carer, or family member) contributed significantly to the consultation. There was strong support for the actions which have been informed by evidence, best practice and the engagement process.



## 1. How the plan will help to address mental health inequalities, including the issues highlighted during the inquiry

Developing the plan has been a complex task, requiring us to consider the broad range of professionals, services and settings who interact with people who have a mental health need.

At the outset of the development of the plan, we recognised that there is a clear link between workforce and access, where gaps in the workforce can lead people experiencing difficulties in accessing care.

The demand for mental health services is increasing and the pandemic will be a contributory factor. We have referenced a range of demand factors within our plan which are, in the main, driven by wider determinants of health including societal and economic factors as well as an ageing population. Addressing these broader factors is beyond the scope of a workforce plan but we have focussed on the key workforce supply factors that we can influence either directly through our statutory functions, or in partnership with employers across health and social care.

Supply side actions include expanding the training and education pipeline, focussing on attraction and recruitment; retention strategies and reshaping roles to develop people's skills and competencies and opportunities to develop along a career pathway. Not all of these will be in our direct control; for example, workforce retention will be largely driven by employers but as the strategic workforce organisations in Wales we can support employers in fulfilling their roles.

There is a golden thread running throughout the plan around the importance of wellbeing, inclusion and Welsh language. Rather than these being separate action points, these are now woven through the actions set out within the plan.

The plan has been designed to drive change and improvements in how we develop, value and support both our specialist mental health workforce and the wider health and social care workforce. Creating a culture of inclusion, fairness and equity across our workforce is central to the Plan and whilst it is specifically focussed on workforce rather than service development, it is designed to support implementation of Together for Mental Health.

Our ambition in the workforce strategy for health and social care, directly translates into this strategic mental health workforce plan. The actions in this plan will come together to deliver a motivated, engaged and valued, health and social care mentioned health workforce, with the capacity, competence and confidence to meet the needs of the people of Wales.

Specifically,

- To have a workforce with the right values, behaviours, knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver evidence-based care, and support people's wellbeing as close to home as possible.
- To have a workforce in sufficient numbers to be able to deliver responsive mental health services across health and social care that meets the needs of the people of Wales.
- To have a workforce that is reflective of the population's diversity, Welsh language and cultural identity.
- To have a workforce that feels valued and is valued.

In response to the specific issues raised, the following section provides a brief summary of the key actions:

### **Capacity**

There are a number of actions to improve capacity in mental health services. Examples of these are:

- **Action 1** - Increase the annual commissioning of education and training numbers related to the specialist mental health workforce for the next three years
- **Action 5** - Develop and implement plans to ensure that there is an appropriate supply of trained professionals to undertake new and existing statutory roles.
- **Action 13** - Develop a targeted attraction campaign programme for the mental health workforce, supported by [Train Work Live](#) and [We Care Wales](#).

- **Action 26** – Review qualifying and post-qualifying training for social workers to encourage greater specialism and take up in mental health.

### ***Wellbeing of the mental health and wider workforce***

The plan includes actions to improve the wellbeing of the mental health and wider workforce. Examples of these are:

- **Action 9** - Establish a national support service for the mental health workforce
- **Action 10** - Identify, train and support a network of mentors which will be hosted on 'Gwella' to provide consistent and agreed standards for mental health staff mentoring.
- **Action 17** - Develop and roll out mental health literacy training for the health and care workforce, to provide more seamless support for physical and mental health.

### ***Awareness and training in relation to equality and diversity issues***

The Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care identified three fundamental principles: wellbeing, inclusion and the Welsh language. Instead of forming separate themes these fundamental principles underpin each of the seven themes as they are a critical element that contribute to the approach to implementation of every action in the Strategy. We have adopted a similar approach in developing this Plan with an expectation that the fundamental principles would be woven through all of the implementation plans as a 'golden tread'. This will ensure that every action will be implemented with a focus on wellbeing, inclusion and Welsh language.

It is important to recognise that employers (Health Boards, Local Authorities and third/private social care providers) have a key role in ensuring that they have local mechanisms in place to address equality and diversity issues including the provision of statutory and mandatory training and other actions that enable them to meet statutory responsibilities. In fulfilling our leadership development role, we will ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are included as core topics and areas of focus for all our leaders and to continue to promote compassionate and collective leadership. Alongside employers across health and social care, we will review how to best utilise the Cultural Competence Certification Scheme developed by Diverse Cymru.

## **2. How this plan, and the broader Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care (October 2020) will ensure that the mental health (and wider) workforce is more representative of the diverse communities it serves.**

As outlined above, both the Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care and the Mental Health Workforce Plan contain actions that are underpinned by three fundamental principles which include Welsh language and inclusion. By adhering to these principles during the implementation phase, both Strategy and Plan will help to ensure that the mental health (and wider) workforce is more representative of the diverse communities it serves. Through our governance arrangements we will ensure that the fundamental principles will underpin any actions that are implemented within the broader Strategy and the Workforce Plan.

Within HEIW, we are pro-actively addressing inclusion through our Strategic Equality Plan and our commissioning levers to effect change. We have a programme of work to review all educational contracts. In phase 1 (which focussed on undergraduate provision), we re-commissioned all contracts with Higher Education Institutions and have built in content and clauses that specifically focus on inclusion. An example of this is addressing a specific concern about gaps in Welsh language educational provision which has resulted in us awarded new contracts that have expanded the ability for students to be educated through the medium of Welsh, thereby securing a future pipeline of Welsh speaking nurses. Phase 2 of the programme is focussing on a similar approach with our postgraduate provision.

HEIW also has a Differential Attainment Programme Board which is intended to implement a fair training culture by designing and delivering workshops that focus on developing a diverse workforce for diverse patient groups. Differential attainment is defined by the GMC as the gap between attainment levels of different groups of doctors. We have delivered a series of webinars for circa 450 trainees and trainers across Wales.

As part of implementation of our Strategic Equality Plan (SEP), HEIW continues to engage with external partners to provide an impartial review of our policies and practices to ensure alignment with national standards in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion. We are taking forward a range of actions in respect of Workforce Diversity. As an example, our Professional Support Unit is recruiting trainee Inclusion Champions from medical and dental speciality programmes. These champions will lead in promoting compassionate values & behaviours and promote a culture of inclusivity for new and existing trainees.

In respect of the Workforce Strategy for Mental Health, one of our key actions is to introduce a peer support model into Wales. Peer support is generally understood to be a relationship of mutual support where people with similar life experiences offer each other support especially as they move through difficult or challenging experiences. Introducing this model into Wales should help to improve awareness of the needs of individuals helping to promote a culture of inclusivity.

Social Care Wales Strategic Equality Plan has been founded on strong engagement with key partners, stakeholders and wider community based representative groups to ensure that our objectives reflect the views of the public we aim to protect. As an organisation we assess the impact of all our work against both language and equality standards and have recently obtained recognition as a disability confident organisation.

Our professional pathway for social work has clear objectives around language provision and this is monitored through the annual quality assurance process and programme governance of the qualifying and post qualifying requires representation from service users and unpaid carers to ensure that the voice of those with lived experience is key to the development and delivery of programmes. This extends to some teaching input to extend the impact that those with a lived experience can have on the development of our future workforce.

As part of the Mwy na Geiriau action plan, we are committed to improving the data and profiling of all education programmes relevant to social care so we can better resource and target areas requiring improvement. We have already focussed on the need for more Welsh Language speakers in our We Care Wales attraction campaign as well as a focus on the need for more males in the workforce.

In summary, as system leaders our role is to improve awareness and help to embed equality and diversity across the wider health and care system. We can support employers through our leadership development function, but ultimately there is an onus and responsibility on them to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is considered as an essential element of local plans.

### **3. When the plan will be published, and whether you are willing to share an advance copy in confidence**

We finalised the plan in June 2022, and it was submitted to Welsh Government and also shared with the Ministerial Oversight and Delivery Board chaired by the Deputy Minister.

The Plan is available on our website [Mental Health - HEIW \(nhs.wales\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health-equality-inclusion-wales/) and we are planning a more formal launch in the Autumn.

### **4. Which aspects of the plan you anticipate being prioritised for implementation**

We are working with the Welsh Government to consider the implementation options, prioritisation and funding and these discussions are ongoing.

The final plan shaped through the engagement and consultation phases contains 33 key actions across each of the 7 themes of our Workforce Strategy.

Some actions within the plan that can be taken forward without the need for significant additional resource or where pump priming monies can be used to develop pathfinders to develop or test new models.

A critical element of the plan relates to the need to invest in expanding the education and training pipeline of professionals (Nursing, Allied Health Professionals, Psychology and Physician Associates) so that it better reflects the demand coming through from Health Board Integrated Medium Term Plans. We are proposing a 20% increase in nurse training places so that by the end of the current education and training cycle (2025/26) we will have increased the number of nurses being trained by 75% above the 2019 baseline. We are proposing a 10% increase in Occupational Therapists (who are the largest Allied Health Professional within Mental Health services); continued increase in the number of Psychologists including testing a new model of Clinical Associates in Applied Psychology (CAAP) as well as increasing the number of Physician Associates.

This is the most resource intensive element of the Plan and we have identified this within the HEIW annual Education & Training Plan which was submitted to Welsh Government at the end of July. These increases are proposed to address critical workforce gaps in the service, and to ensure that we have the right number of people within the workforce to respond to increases in demand for services into the future.

A key theme that came through the consultation was the need to invest in leadership development across the health and social care workforce and to also supporting ongoing educational activities that develops and enhances workforce skills and models (such as effective mentoring, supervision, development programmes and ongoing CPD). To that end, we are keen that there is funding that is specifically earmarked to ensure that we are responding to the specific needs of the mental health workforce. This investment will pay dividends if used as part of a broader package that demonstrates a real commitment to our workforce that will support recruitment and also retention.

Finally, there are elements of the plan that relate to the delivery of national policy or legislative changes (such as preparing for the introduction of changes to the Mental Health Act and Liberty Protection Safeguards).

## **5. What assessment has been made of the staff and financial resources required to deliver the plan and whether sufficient resource is available**

Each action has been assessed in terms of the resource requirement. We have identified that some actions can be progressed with no or limited additional resource or where funding can be provided to pump prime actions. HEIW and Social Care Wales remain committed to prioritising mental health within our core resources allocations where possible.

However, many of the actions will require additional resourcing and we have shared an assessment of these for Welsh Government consideration. Most actions align fully with Welsh Government policy priorities and/or priorities that have been identified as requiring investment in education and training which have been included in the Education and Training Plan. We hope that as part of the prioritisation of policy resources identified for Mental Health that funding can be provided for implementation of the Workforce Plan – but we do understand that the plan does need to be considered by the Welsh Government in the context of other workforce priorities.

## **6. How progress on delivery of the plan will be measured and reported.**

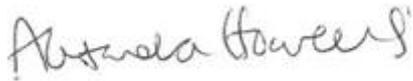
We are currently reviewing governance arrangements recognising that these may need to be adjusted as we move from planning to implementation. We will continue to work jointly, as Health Education Improvement Wales and Social Care Wales and to develop close working arrangements with employers across the health and social care sector. As well as ensuring a robust programme management approach to implementation of the actions we intend to develop a benefits realisation plan that sets out a series of measures that we can track benefits of any additional investment.

We will ensure through our respective Boards that there is an effective assurance mechanism in place as part of our delivery arrangements. As a minimum, we will ensure that there is an annual report on progress made publicly available and scrutinised via our Boards.

Our web-pages are currently being developed and will hold public facing material to highlight our progress.

I hope this response assists the Committee in its Inquiry and we would be happy to provide further information if required.

Yours sincerely



**ALEXANDRA HOWELLS**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
**HEIW**



**SUE EVANS**  
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