

Pre-appointment hearing: Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Pre-appointment questionnaire

January 2024

Background

You are being asked to complete this questionnaire because you are the Welsh Government's preferred candidate for the post of Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board.

Your answers to this questionnaire will be published with the meeting papers for the pre-appointment hearing, and will be used to inform Members' preparation for the hearing. Your response to each question should be no more than around 250 words.

Providing Written Evidence

The Senedd has two official languages, Welsh and English.

In line with [the Senedd's Official Languages Scheme](#) the Committee requests that documents or written responses to consultations intended for publication or use in Senedd proceedings are submitted bilingually. When documents or written responses are not submitted bilingually, we will publish in the language submitted, stating that it has been received in that language only.

Please see [guidance for those providing evidence for committee](#).



Disclosure of information

Please ensure that you have considered the [Senedd's policy on disclosure of information](#) before submitting information to the Committee

1. What motivated you to apply to be the Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board?

I feel passionate about public services. Or, rather, about seeking to create excellent and forward-thinking public services that provide support, assistance and guidance to the people of Wales. For me, this is part of the agenda to create a Fairer Wales and a regime that will enable people to live their lives to their full potential.

Health, and the health and care system, is an important cornerstone in this regard: it touches all our lives at different times and is a key part of the social fabric that sustains our communities across the north.

I have lived and worked in the north my whole life. Family members have worked or continue to work for the health service locally. I have experience of the NHS first-hand literally from the cradle to the grave and have always felt grateful for the support.

But now it is fair to say that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board is underperforming and falling short in terms of delivering world-class public services. Indeed, with the Board in special measures, the situation can be described as unacceptable and one where a new direction is needed.

I am currently acting as interim Chair of the Board following action by the Welsh Government last February. This period has been very challenging, but also exciting at times! Things are changing: there is a different culture, important permanent appointments have taken place and we have an excellent team of Independent Members. I am keen to continue to be involved in shaping a new future for the Health Board. I believe I have a contribution to make as one of the leaders of the organisation. That contribution is not necessarily better, or worse, than the contribution others can make. But it is possibly a contribution that Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board needs in the current context.

2. Why do you think you are well-suited for the role?

I have a background in Local Government, as former leader of Gwynedd Council and as a Member and spokesperson for the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). In addition, I have experience in education, both as a former small business owner and as a volunteer with third-sector bodies. These experiences, along with my time as a Non-

Executive Director on the boards of the Welsh Revenue Authority and Public Health Wales, have given me special opportunities to gain the appropriate leadership skills for this role. I have learned a lot, succeeded and failed at times, but I have benefitted from every experience. The various roles I have taken on over the years have meant that I have gained a broad understanding of what it means to lead a public body of a certain size, to create change, to connect with people and to create success.

And just as important, in my opinion, is that I understand north Wales and its people. I have lived and worked in the north-east and north-west, with a period in between as well! All of this means I have connections across the north and can relate to people in their diverse communities. As a user of health services myself I know that the people in these areas need and deserve the best possible Health Service.

I am a person who hopefully balances an ambitious attitude with the reality of certain situations. But I am a person who recognises weaknesses and the need to change. Perseverance and determination are undoubtedly needed if you want to succeed in this job. I am ready to continue to give everything I have to the job and to serve the Health Board, and Welsh Government, to the best of my ability.

3. What are the three main outcomes that you want to achieve during your tenure?

To lead a Health Board that believes in learning and continuing improvement

To lead a Health Board that understands quality and standards in all its activities

To lead a Health Board that is outward-facing, engages with the public and partners and is open and transparent

4. How will you work with NHS bodies, Welsh Government, local authorities and social care partners?

One of my priorities since being appointed to the position of interim Chair of the Health Board is strengthening engagement with partners. In this regard I have met all Local Authority leaders and the majority of Chief Executives. I have attended scrutiny committees and plenary meetings of the Council to provide an update on the Health Board's position and an opportunity for members to ask questions or raise any points. This relationship needs to be developed further and a focus is needed on that common ground of securing suitable support for the citizen. I intend to hold relevant and regular meetings to achieve this. I will continue to attend meetings of the Regional Partnership Board, submitting timely progress reports, and will attend meetings with Audit Wales and Health Education and Improvement Wales. Establishing a constructive relationship

with these two organisations has been very important and I will continue to maintain this relationship into the future.

As a Board in Special Measures, we are in close contact with the Minister for Health and Social Services and the Deputy Minister for Mental Health and Well-being. We have taken every opportunity to arrange visits with Ministers to demonstrate developments and share information. The First Minister has also held discussions with the Chief Executive and myself. Continuing these links is key, and the same is true for Government officials – both locally and nationally.

I am fully involved in the network of All-Wales Health Chairs and I intend to organise Board-to-Board meetings with Public Health Wales and Health Education and Improvement Wales into the future.

5. How will you work with community groups, patients, the third sector and other stakeholders?

I am keen to build on the work of listening to patients' voices/experiences in our activities. I believe that we need to consider the experiences of patients and their families as a resource that can be valuable to the Health Board on our journey towards improvement. In this regard I am keen for the Board to gain more knowledge about patient experiences more directly by collecting relevant data and information but also engaging in discussions with specific groups.

Local Partnership Forum meetings provide an opportunity to promote the collaboration agenda and discuss workforce needs. Direct meetings with representatives of local Trade Unions would also provide this. I am keen to build on this work so that frontline staff and the workforce can have an influence in shaping our services into the future.

I have worked with the Chief Executive and other officials to organise a programme of community meetings across the region. This is an opportunity to engage directly with people and community groups and the third sector. I hope this work will develop into an ongoing discussion so that we can learn about the concerns and hopes of our people. Specific committees within the Board such as the Strategic Stakeholder Group and the Partnerships Committee provide an opportunity to promote the third sector agenda as well, but I am keen to do more by identifying collaboration opportunities and ensuring better ownership of the collaboration agenda among community and third-sector groups, in seeking to realise the clear potential that exists.

6. How will you work with Senedd Members and Senedd committees?

Since being appointed as interim Chair, I have worked to maintain constructive and open relationships with all Senedd Members in the region. I will continue to do this by holding meetings, whether as individuals or as a group. I understand the importance of correspondence from Members of the Senedd on behalf of their constituents and will continue to promote a regime that responds to this and to be available to assist Members directly as required. I also want to work with Members to offer them opportunities to visit new services or developments so that any changes can be seen first-hand in their constituencies. I will seek to promote a relationship that proactively informs Members of the Senedd of any developments or problems in their constituencies.

I will be happy to work with Senedd committees to provide updates on the development of the Health Board in Special Measures and will be happy to work with committee chairs to identify opportunities for inquiries or visits to find relevant information. I will, of course, be very happy to present evidence to Senedd committees on any occasion.

7. Do you currently hold any other appointments that could give rise to any potential conflicts of interest or perceived conflicts of interest? If so, how do you propose to manage those conflicts or perceptions?

I surrendered my roles as Non-Executive Director of the Welsh Revenue Authority and as an Independent Member of Public Health Wales, on an interim basis, whilst taking up the post as acting Chair of the Health Board. If appointed to the position of Chair on a permanent basis, I would give up both of these positions.