

Pre-appointment hearing: Chair of Velindre University NHS Trust

Pre-appointment questionnaire

June 2025

Background

You are being asked to complete this questionnaire because you are the Welsh Government's preferred candidate for the post of Chair of Velindre University NHS Trust.

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 committees](#).

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 Velindre University NHS Trust?

I have a career-long commitment to public service and significant experience of leading third sector organizations where the interests and the voice of beneficiaries are front and centre. As I come to the end of my eight-year term as an Independent Member at Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, I see our health and care services do amazing work every day and also face huge challenges which impact on patients and staff. For me, this role is a privileged opportunity to help meet those challenges and build a service fit for the future.

Velindre University NHS Trust holds a unique and precious position in Wales. Blood and cancer services, between them, will touch most of our lives at some point. The hosted services are crucial to facilitating NHS Wales. I was motivated and excited to apply for the position of Chair because I believe Velindre - with its expertise and focus - has potential to play an important national role in developing specialist care that makes cancer outcomes better and fairer, with the new cancer centre a beacon for this. This is an exciting time to be joining Velindre with the building of the centre now underway and an increased emphasis on widespread, patient-focused collaboration.

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

I believe I am well-suited to the role for a number of reasons:

Leadership and governance experience:

I have extensive experience of leadership, both as an executive and a non-executive board director. As an independent member of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, I have contributed to the development of the organization including as the founding Chair of the People and Culture Committee and Chair of the Mental Health and Capacity Legislation Committee. As Director and Chief Executive, I led Mind Cymru to growth, innovation and connectivity, including through Covid, and I led the Moondance Cancer Initiative, a philanthropic organization dedicated to investing in innovation to improve cancer outcomes in Wales. I currently chair healthcare regulation tribunals and am publicly accountable for delivering fair and well-reasoned decision often in highly complex and sensitive circumstances.

Personal experience and qualities:

I have a deep commitment to service and to Wales. I returned here to work so that my children could be brought up bilingually and consider this their home. My work has always involved connecting with and understanding multiple experiences and perspectives, so that we can find more effective and collaborative ways of doing things with better outcomes for citizens. In doing this, I am able to reflect on my own experiences of caring for disabled family members.

I am committed to bringing people together to learn and improve. I have set up and led many collaborations including Comms Cymru, to improve skills and connectivity across public and third sector engagement professionals; the Wales Alliance for Mental Health; and the Wales Mental Health Crisis Care Concordat group.

Communications and engagement expertise:

As a leading communications professional I have a deep understanding of the crucial role that internal and external communications have on a strategic, tactical and cultural level. In leading the organization, I would ensure that effective engagement and insight into our multiple stakeholders supports us in setting our strategic direction and in developing and improving our services. I will be an effective advocate and ambassador for Velindre, open to listening, learning and improving to build trust, confidence and accountability.

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

The main outcomes I would want to deliver during my tenure, are the following:

Improving cancer care and outcomes.

I want to ensure that Velindre, as a centre of excellence for cancer care, plays a leading role for Wales, working across systems to improve cancer care and treatment. As a result, outcomes would be better and more consistent for people with cancer, whatever their background, and we would be more effective as a nation in preventing many cancers. Key to this is delivering a new cancer centre of which we can all be proud; making the most of the new satellite unit which is closer to many of the population we serve; leading development, knowledge-exchange and training for clinicians and specialist staff; and strengthening research and innovation – including using digital technology and conducting patient trials.

Securing the future of a national blood and transplant service which is amongst the best in the UK and internationally.

I would work to ensure that the blood service, an essential Wales-wide enabler of care and treatment - is sustainable for the long term with a secure, loyal and diverse donor base and excellent relationships with the organizations we serve. This would be a platform for increasing research and innovation as well as providing a safe, reliable and high-quality service.

Leading a compassionate, well-governed, high-performing organization which is known for attracting, training and retaining the best staff and for excellent, safe and valued patient care.

I would develop a cohesive and ambitious Board in which executive and independent members have the skills, knowledge and psychological safety to continue to improve, develop, scrutinize and be accountable. This includes making sure we have robust governance and a clear line of sight to how and what we are doing in all parts of the organization, including our hosted services. I would ensure the Board gets regular and specific performance, people and resource data aligned to our purpose and looks to the future in an environment where treatments and care pathways are evolving rapidly. I would have robust systems for strategic development and operational control enabling us to be transparent and accountable and helping us to spot and deal with risks and opportunities.

We can build stakeholder trust and make sure that the talent, knowledge and insights of our staff are fully used. I would want to be visible to and supportive of staff, and to make sure Board members see for themselves how we work, so we fully understand our own organization, people and environment and use this knowledge to inform our decision making and seek assurance.

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

To be sustainable and to thrive public services must work together focusing on patients and citizens. Patients and carers should not have to face disjointed, inaccessible and fragmented care which is also often wasteful and may cause harm.

I would prioritize working with colleagues across public services – particularly other Chairs and Welsh Government - using data, insight and expertise from clinicians and organizations inside and outside Wales to drive better care and outcomes and look for ways of making service sustainable in terms of people, finance and infrastructure. As Chair, I would take visible, personal accountability for developing and sustaining a collaborative, compassionate and open culture.

I would particularly want to engage with: increased regional and national working alongside other Chairs to improve care and outcomes; ensuring the new cancer centre is successful and leads to enhance patient experience and public trust; our role as a specialist centre in developing the workforce of the future; and opportunities to strengthen governance transparency and accountability.

In relation to cancer, the Wales Audit Office in 2024 found that “stronger and clearer national leadership is urgently needed to improve cancer services along with a greater focus on prevention”. As Wales’ specialist cancer centre, Velindre has the potential to play a central role which I would facilitate as Chair. The blood service covers the whole of Wales. It is well run and well-loved and I would seek to ensure that we continue to understand and meet clinical need with NHS partners and to further develop research and innovation.

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

As Chair I would be visibly accountable for the highest standards of clinical care and governance at Velindre. This accountability is to the public and patients and, on their behalf, to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care.

Engaging and working with those we serve and who have a stake in what we do and how we do it is vital on many fronts. It is key to making sure our care is safe, fair and accessible. It enables us to know when we may need to learn and adapt. It opens a route to working effectively with others so we can be prudent in the way we use our resources and talent and innovative in the way we work, co-producing solutions. It means putting patients and communities at the centre of our thinking, and working for the future. I would look for partnerships, participation, trust and openness.

As a leading communications professional for 30 years, I have a deep understanding of patient and public engagement as a strategic tool as well as a tactical activity. I would want to ensure I know who our communities and key stakeholders are and what their perspective is before going on to plan regular and purposeful engagement, taking personal responsibility but also working with the Executive and IM's appropriately. I would make sure this is rooted in our purpose and strategy and that our approach is adapted to different groups, paying particular attention to those who we seldom hear from and who may be experiencing worse outcomes and more difficulty in accessing us.

As a former third sector CEO and WCVA trustee, I also understand the potential for working with beneficiary-facing organizations to gain a better understanding of the patient and community perspective and what they can bring to improving patient experience. Velindre has its own vibrant and active charity with committed supporters and donors with whom I would very much want to work.

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

I welcome the opportunity to build constructive, open and positive relationships with Senedd Members so that, together, we get things right for patients, carers and local people and enable Velindre to reach its potential for Wales.

Senedd committees are an important democratic mechanism for holding health services to account for the quality, safety and access to the support and treatment which is crucial to so many. Senedd members and committees have a key role in examining how we can improve care, equity and outcomes and in representing the interests of their constituencies. As an NHS Wales Chair, I would consider that informed and committed engagement with committees (when the opportunity and needs arise) is an important way of increasing public trust and identifying improvements.

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 am an appointed Chair at the Health and Care Professionals Tribunal Service. I oversee independent panels that consider fitness to practice allegations in cases relating to 15 registered professions.

My role is to ensure fair and effective hearings, manage proceedings, and make well-reasoned decisions. As Chair, I am responsible for upholding the public interest and maintaining high standards within the professions. I would ensure that I recuse myself from any case relating in any way to Velindre University NHS Trust or any organization connected to it.