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



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Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Bae Abertawe  
Swansea Bay University  
Health Board

**Pencadlys HEIW**

HEIW Headquarters  
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Nantgarw CF15 7QQ

**Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Bae Abertawe**

Swansea Bay University Health Board  
**Un Porthfa Talbot** | One Talbot Gateway  
**Parc Ynni, Baglan** | Baglan Energy Park  
Port Talbot SA12 7BR

28 November 2025

Peter Fox MS  
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
CF99 1SN

Dear Mr Fox

Thank you for your letter of 13<sup>th</sup> November which follows up on our recent communications. Whilst your initial letter was a result of contact from the cohort of graduating Adult nurses from Swansea University regarding vacancies in Swansea Bay UHB, you have also asked questions related to the balance between commissioned places and vacancies in relation to both nursing and allied health professions. We are pleased to provide further insight to the current situation and underlying processes.

In relation to your specific questions:

1. In your response you confirm that there will be 65 graduates from Swansea University for the Adult nursing field and no posts available in Swansea Bay UHB. Why is there such a discrepancy between the number of adult nursing training places offered as part of the March 2023 cohort and the number of job vacancies?

There are vacancies available for Swansea University graduates. Swansea University educates Nurses for both Swansea Bay UHB and Hywel Dda UHB. When streamlining opened on 20<sup>th</sup> October, although there were 0 vacancies for Swansea Bay UHB, there were 20 vacancies in Hywel Dda. As of 25<sup>th</sup> November there are now 42 Adult Nursing vacancies available in Swansea Bay UHB and 29 in Hywel Dda UHB, giving a total of 73 vacancies. These are in the Health Boards which Swansea University serves, although we do encourage students to seek employment in any location that appeals and is possible, to encourage workforce cross-pollination.

HEIW collects data from Health Boards and Trusts annually to inform the guidance it provides to WG through the Education and Training Plan. For full-time pre-registration

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programmes – such as Nursing - lasting three years - this data is collected four years ahead of graduates qualifying. Therefore, students graduating in spring 2026 result from information gathered in 2022. The intervening years have seen significant work by Health Boards to optimise their establishment and manage the post-COVID period, impacting on the vacancy rate.

2. What are the reasons that no posts have been made available in this field in Swansea Bay UHB as part of the streamlining process? Have budgetary pressures or recruitment freezes been a factor?

Swansea Bay has made progress in addressing its nurse establishment deficit through recruitment and retention work. As a result, their establishment vacancies are now at a low level. Further work was required to identify posts for graduates. They have now identified 42 posts, and more are available in adjacent Health Boards.

3. Why has this information come to light at such a late stage, so that students were only recently made aware? When did you become aware that no posts would be available for this cohort?

The streamlining process collects vacancies from Health Boards and Trusts before and after streamlining opens to student applications. At opening on 20<sup>th</sup> October there were 220 vacancies for 262 graduates. This is a normal situation, and positions tend to be added after opening. However, given the specific Swansea HB position we recognise that further work should have been undertaken at the outset to address this, which would have avoided causing concern to students. In future our processes will pick up such issues to ensure they are escalated for attention sooner. At the time of writing, the number of vacancies has increased, with ~300 now available for 262 graduates across all fields of nursing.

4. What steps have you taken since becoming aware that no posts would be available?

We have convened a working group with senior staff from Swansea Bay UHB, Hywel Dda UHB and NWSSP to consider how vacancies can be identified and made available. CTM UHB are also contributing to the group due to their proximity to Swansea Bay UHB. The group has collaborated – successfully - to identify appropriate posts which are now available on the streamlining portal. We have communicated with the students directly, held a face-to-face meeting with them, and followed this up with another communication. Plans are in place for ongoing communications.

5. What is the latest position regarding the March 2023 Adult nursing cohort – are you now, or do you hope to be, in a position to offer any Adult nursing jobs to this cohort?

The latest position for Adult Nursing is detailed in this table:

<b>Health Board</b>	<b>Number of Posts (at 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025)</b>
<b>ABUHB</b>	15
<b>BCUHB</b>	47
<b>CAVUHB</b>	10
<b>CTMUHB</b>	38
<b>HDUHB</b>	29
<b>PTHB</b>	2
<b>SBUHB</b>	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>183</b>

Adult vacancies (183) now exceed the number of adult graduates (166). Imperfect geographical distribution of adult field vacancies means that – as is normal – we will be supporting some graduates, through the escalation process, to find jobs in alternative suitable locations. For example, some Swansea University graduates may be able to take up employment in CTMUHB in Bridgend.

6. What plans are in place for the next Adult nursing cohort to graduate in 2026 – do you expect them to be in a similar position with regards Adult nursing vacancies?

Generally vacancy levels across Wales have reduced due to significant and intensive action that has been taken over recent years. Whilst this is positive for both front line staff and patients, collective action from all NHS organisations is needed to continue to support our new graduates. Following this streamlining event, NWSSP will begin preparing in January for the next event for the summer 2026 graduates. They will regularly report on the vacancy information they are receiving from Health Boards / Trusts from that point onward to support management of the summer 2026 event. We are also establishing an 'Education and Training Implementation Board' that will draw together senior leaders from employing Health Boards and Trusts to receive, discuss and take early action on any deficits based on that emerging intelligence.

7. Given the discrepancy between training places and available posts for the March 2023 cohort, what steps are you taking in relation to planning for future training places?

Since 2022/23 the quality and accuracy of workforce data has improved significantly which is essential for effective planning. HEIW has in recent years developed dashboards that provide regularly updated information on the student pipeline to support vacancy planning.

We are establishing an Education and Training Implementation Board, which will bring together key senior leaders from across NHS Wales. This group will utilise recently developed student/trainee pipeline dashboards to provide high quality intelligence to support HBT's in their planning for future graduates.

The contracts we have in place with our Education Providers specify ranges of places, from a minimum to a maximum. In addition to the flexibility this gives us to accommodate fluctuations in annual Health Board and Trust needs, we can also flex the minimum and maximum by  $\pm 20\%$  to help manage the pipeline. Our recommendations for the 2026 Education and Training Plan is to commission at the lower end of this range, which will help manage the balance between demand and supply.

8. To HEIW: in your reply you state that the positive impact of increased education and training, the national retention programme and international recruitment potentially impacts on the availability of vacancies for graduates in some areas and professions. You say that strong collaborative work between NHS organisations is required and that you are playing a key role in bringing partners together. Can you provide more information on the areas and posts that are affected by this, and the actions being taken? Can you also give details of the current position in relation to the numbers of graduating students per field and the vacancies available in each health board area for all nursing fields, physiotherapy and other allied health professionals?

During COVID we saw increased demand from Health Boards and Trusts for nurses and AHP's. We worked hard to respond to that demand, developing initiatives to improve staff retention, maximise programme fill rates, and support student progression. Our National Retention Programme began in December 2023 and to date an estimated 2640 potential leavers have been avoided and their valuable knowledge, skill and expertise retained. We are also working hard with system partners to maximise recruitment. For example, the 'Healthcare Connect' Scheme which helps applicants to Nursing programmes who do not meet entry requirements at one intake point to strengthen their application to help them gain admission at the next entry point. It also includes our work with Powys to develop the 'Aspiring Nurse' programme, which has been successful and is now being scaled to other health boards. These are examples of a broader portfolio of work in this area.

The latest vacancy data for Nursing and allied health professionals/healthcare sciences is provided in appendix 1. This data is accurate as of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2025. For Nurses, the data is for the spring 2026 graduating cohort - the 2<sup>nd</sup>, spring 2023, intake of the 2022-2023 academic session. Please note that all summer 2025 (September 2022 entry) graduates are in jobs. For AHP's/Healthcare Sciences the data refers to graduates from summer 2025 as there is one annual intake. This data is incomplete due to several factors that pose challenges to comprehensive data collection. Notably these disciplines do not participate in streamlining because of cohort size and vacancies for several are found not only in the NHS but in private sector, social care and local authority settings. The data therefore underestimates the available vacancies. We have improved data quality over recent years and continue this work to achieve further improvements. We are aware of the discrepancy between graduates (81) and vacancies (35) for Diagnostic Radiography and are working with colleagues across NHS Wales regarding this.

9. To HEIW: Related to the above, we have been hearing anecdotally of a lack of available posts for soon-to-be-qualified/recently graduated medical students and doctors

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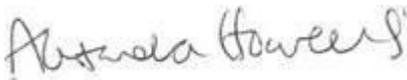
completing their foundation training and looking for specialist training. Are you aware of this, and what action is being taken in relation to it?

Yes, we are aware of concerns. The policies related to medical recruitment are agreed at UK level. In recent years there has been an oversubscription to the UK foundation training programme, resulting from the rise in output from UK medical schools and rules on international medical graduates. This means that there are more eligible applicants than posts. However, each UK nation has provided an increased number of posts to ensure that all have been offered posts.

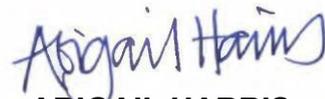
Across the UK we are therefore seeing increasing competition ratios at the foundation to specialty grade transition point, which is resulting in some doctors finding difficulty securing posts. This is being addressed via work to reduce competition ratios to more acceptable levels via range of mechanisms. Expanding the number of specialty and GP training posts is part of this solution.

As we stated in our initial response, please be assured that HEIW, SBUHB, HDUHB, and other system partners are working collaboratively – and making significant progress – to identify vacancies for graduates from commissioned Nursing and AHP programmes.

Yours sincerely



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



**ABIGAIL HARRIS**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
**SWANSEA BAY UHB**

**Table 1**  
**Current Vacancies by Nursing Field**  
 (available in streamlining for Spring 2026 graduates)

		<b>Vacancies at start of streamlining (20<sup>th</sup> October)</b>	<b>Current Posts on streamlining (25<sup>th</sup> November)</b>	<b>Health Board Total</b>
<b><u>ABUHB</u></b>	Adult	15	15	35
	Mental Health	12	12	
	Learning Disability	2	2	
	Child	6	6	
<b><u>BCUHB</u></b>	Adult	41	47	74
	Mental Health	23	27	
	Learning Disability	0	0	
	Child	0	0	
<b><u>CVUHB</u></b>	Adult	4	10	23
	Mental Health	1	8	
	Learning Disability	0	0	
	Child	3	5	
<b><u>CTMUHB</u></b>	Adult	33	38	45
	Mental Health	2	7	
	Learning Disability	0	0	
	Child	0	0	
<b><u>HDUHB</u></b>	Adult	20	29	34
	Mental Health	3	3	
	Learning Disability	2	2	
	Child	0	0	
<b><u>PTHB</u></b>	Adult	1	2	6
	Mental Health	4	4	
	Learning Disability	0	0	
	Child	0	0	
<b><u>SBUHB</u></b>	Adult	0	42	84
	Mental Health	31	31	
	Learning Disability	11	11	
	Child	0	0	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>301</b>	

**Table 2**  
**AHP/Healthcare Science Bursaried Graduates and Jobs**  
**Summer 2025 cohort**

Data is subject to the caveats related to participation in streamlining and employment destinations that challenge accurate and comprehensive data collection. These disciplines do not participate in a streamlining exercise because of their small size and/or because vacancies are found not just in the NHS but in the private sector, social care and local authorities. The data in many cases therefore underestimates available vacancies. We are aware of the discrepancy between graduates (81) and vacancies (35) for Diagnostic Radiotherapy and are working with colleagues across NHS Wales regarding this.

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Graduates</b>	<b>Vacancies</b> (at 25 <sup>th</sup> November)
<b>Audiology</b>	7	8
<b>Biomedical Sciences</b>	14	28
<b>Cardiac Physiology</b>	14	6
<b>Dental Hygiene and Therapy</b>	6	n/a
<b>Diagnostic Radiography</b>	81	35
<b>Dietetics</b>	53	43
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>	125	84
<b>Physiotherapy</b>	90	94
<b>Radiotherapy and Oncology</b>	16	10
<b>Speech and Language Therapy</b>	42	24
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>332</b>

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