

# Structured Assessment 2021 (Phase One) – Operational Planning Arrangements – Powys Teaching Health Board

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# Summary report

## About this report

- 1 This report sets out the findings from phase one of the Auditor General's 2021 Structured Assessment on the operational planning arrangements at Powys Teaching Health Board (the Health Board). Our Structured Assessment is designed to help discharge the Auditor General's statutory requirement to be satisfied that NHS bodies have made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in their use of resources under section 61 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2014.
- 2 Health bodies are required to submit a three-year Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) to the Welsh Government on an annual basis. In January 2020, health bodies submitted IMTPs, covering the period 2020-2023, for approval. However, the Welsh Government suspended the process for approving IMTPs to allow health bodies to focus on responding to the unprecedented and ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3 The Minister for Health and Social Services set out shorter planning cycles for health bodies covering 2020-21. Guidance set out key considerations for planning, with the requirement for health bodies to produce a quarter one plan by 18 May 2020, a quarter two plan by 3 July 2020, and a combined plan covering quarters three and four by 19 October 2020.
- 4 The planning framework for quarters three and four 2020-21 covers the maintenance of effective and efficient operational planning arrangements in health bodies to guide their continuing response to the pandemic as well as responding to winter pressures and the implications of EU transition. Health bodies also need to continue to lay the foundations for effective recovery beyond 2020-21.
- 5 In our [2020 Structured Assessment report](#) we considered the Health Board's planning arrangements for developing the quarters one and two plans. This report considers the planning arrangements which underpinned the development of the operational plan for quarters three and four of 2020-21.

## Key messages

- 6 Overall, we found **the Health Board has effective operational planning arrangements, underpinned with good arrangements to engage with staff members and the public, and to monitor delivery of operational plans.**
- 7 The Health Board's Quarters 3-4 Plan was submitted to the Welsh Government within the required timeframe, covers the necessary areas within the planning framework guidance and received independent member scrutiny.
- 8 The Health Board's operational planning arrangements are robust, and plans were developed through extensive engagement with staff and the public.
- 9 The Health Board had good arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the delivery of the operational plans to the Board, albeit that the use of delivery

milestones was temporarily stood down which made assessment against delivery difficult.

- 10 We have not made any recommendations based on our 2021 Structured Assessment phase one work.

# Detailed report

## Scope and coverage of the 2020-21 Quarters Three-Four Plan

- 11 Our work considered the scope and coverage of the Health Board's Winter Protection Plan 2020-21 which sets out the arrangements for 2020-21 Quarters Three-Four (the Quarters 3-4 Plan) in line with Welsh Government planning guidance.
- 12 We found **the Health Board's Quarters 3-4 Plan was submitted to the Welsh Government within the required timeframe, covers the necessary areas within the planning framework guidance and received independent member scrutiny.**
- 13 The Quarters 3-4 Plan and supporting minimum dataset were produced in partnership with colleagues from Powys County Council, the Joint Partnership Board, and the Regional Partnership Board. The Strategy and Planning Committee held a private in-committee session to discuss the Quarters 3-4 Plan on 6 October 2020. The Committee received a presentation which was followed by a wide-ranging discussion of the detail and independent members had the option to return additional comments offline.
- 14 The Quarters 3-4 Plan was submitted to the Welsh Government on the 19 October 2020, as a draft pending approval by the Board. The Board approved the Quarters 3-4 Plan on 22 October which was the first opportunity to discuss the plan in public due to the compressed timetable. However, regular Board briefings took place to update members on the development of the Quarters 3-4 Plan.
- 15 The Quarters 3-4 Plan covers the requirements established by the Welsh Government in the NHS Wales Operating Framework for Quarters 3 and 4 (2020-21). Each of the four harms is covered and underpinning plans have been completed including the updated Clinical Response Model, the Support Services Model and the Prevention and Response Plan. The Health Board fully populated all relevant areas of the minimum data set.
- 16 The Health Board adapted the planning guidance to ensure that they were able to distinguish between their role as a provider and a commissioner of services to meet the needs of the people of Powys. The Health Board worked closely with organisations providing commissioned services to ensure that the needs of the Powys population were included in their respective plans.
- 17 Alongside the Quarters 3-4 Plan, the Board approved the Powys Regional Partnership Board Winter Unscheduled Care Plan in November 2020 setting out arrangements to meet the demand for health and social care services.
- 18 Following the formal Winter Planning and Delivery Assurance Meeting in December 2020, the Welsh Government wrote to the Chief Executive expressing confidence that the Board has a good approach to responding to workforce challenges, and the delivery of primary and community services, safeguarding arrangements, and Test, Trace, Protect, and mass vaccination programmes. The

Welsh Government also expressed satisfaction that the Health Board is projecting a financial breakeven position, has good engagement and support for the workforce and the third sector, and is delivering new models of care in North and South Powys.

## Arrangements for developing operational plans

- 19 Our work considered the Health Board's arrangements for developing the Quarters 3-4 Plan to support its ongoing response to COVID-19, maintain essential services and resume more routine services.
- 20 We found **the Health Board's operational planning arrangements are robust and plans were developed through extensive engagement with staff and the public.**
- 21 The Quarters 3-4 Plan was developed by the COVID-19 Strategic Gold Group (referred to as the Gold Group in this report) that was initiated at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. All Executive Directors were members of the Gold Group along with a military liaison officer and the Director of Adult and Children's Services at Powys County Council.
- 22 The Quarters 3-4 Plan built on the comprehensive Quarter Two plan which was submitted as required in July 2020. The Quarters 3-4 Plan sets out achievements delivering the actions from the Quarter Two plan for each of the four harms. At the end of each section is a summary of remaining actions from quarter two although this does not set out the time frame or milestones for delivery.
- 23 The Health Board undertook extensive engagement with staff during the summer of 2020 to gather their experiences of new ways of working during the pandemic. Staff provided over 300 pages of narrative which was drawn together into themes in a report **Sharing insights and learning about our response to the COVID-19 pandemic to date.** The Health Board is keen to take forward innovations and increased agility in decision making. At the time of writing this report, the capture of lessons learned was ongoing, with work underway to identify learning on specific workstreams, including how learning might change focus and shape longer-term ambitions. Engagement with the local partnership forum has continued on a weekly/fortnightly basis since the start of the pandemic with strong engagement with Trade Union representatives.
- 24 The Health Board has various mechanisms for engaging with communities when service changes are planned. Prior to the pandemic, the Health Board used locality-based focus groups to engage with communities, but these were stood down due to COVID-19. The Health Board is finding new ways of working with the public and representatives from the third sector. Social media is being used extensively and the Health Board's website was refreshed last year with links to the Health Board's strategies and plans. The Chief Executive attended Town and Community Council events and has undertaken regular online public question and answer sessions. The Health Board also engages with local politicians who share

concerns raised by constituents about health and social care services and any proposed service changes.

- 25 The Health Board has worked very closely with the Community Health Council (CHC) throughout the pandemic. The Health Board met with representatives from the CHC at least once a week throughout the pandemic to make sure the public voice was heard. In August 2020, the Health Board held an online workshop for all CHC members which was an opportunity to share the framework for the Quarters 3-4 Plan and for CHC members to input into development of the plan.
- 26 The Health Board is keen to strengthen its engagement with patients and carers. The Health Board recognises that the patient experience framework has needed a refresh for some time, and this is set out in the clinical quality framework. Understandably, revising the approach to capturing and learning from patient experiences was delayed due to the pandemic, and now needs to be progressed at pace. Our review of quality governance will provide more detail on these arrangements.
- 27 Planning arrangements have strengthened in recent years. The Health Board has a small team dedicated to planning who have worked hard to succeed in developing timely plans which comply with Welsh Government requirements. During the pandemic, the planning team was strengthened with a temporary Assistant Director of Support Services to support the testing and mass vaccination programmes. Staff were also redeployed from the North Powys Programme team to provide additional central capacity, with the Assistant Programme Director playing a key role in the Quarter Two plan.
- 28 As set out in our structured assessment report 2020, input by clinicians into the planning process was strengthened at the start of the pandemic with the establishment of a clinical leadership group. A new Medical Director is now in post who is providing leadership for the clinical response model.
- 29 Alongside delivering the 2020-21 quarterly plans, the Health Board has maintained focus on delivering the Powys ten-year health and care strategy, and the three-year IMTP 2020-2023. In addition to the quarterly plans, the Health Board has continued to progress its 12 strategic priorities agreed in July 2020 and revised in November 2020. These 12 key areas included bringing forward the opening of the Grange Hospital as part of the South Powys Plan, the North Powys Programme, the health and care academy, the Machynlleth full business case and Llandrindod Wells Programme business case. The physical environment has needed to fundamentally change due to the increased need for space due to social distancing, improvements to ventilation and increased oxygen supply.
- 30 The Health Board has undertaken significant activity to develop the required Annual Plan 2021-22. A Board development session in December 2020 set out learning from the pandemic work that the Health Board had undertaken with staff, and a detailed look at the performance of provider and commissioned services. The Board were informed that the Annual Plan 2021-22 would focus on developing a programme of work underpinned with whole system approaches, such as



prevention and alternative solutions, extending capacity, ensuring quality and safety of services, and making use of digital solutions and informatics.

- 31 The planning approach was discussed at a Board meeting in January 2021 and assurance provided as to how the Health Board would address Welsh Government planning requirements.

## Arrangements for monitoring delivery of operational plans

- 32 Our work considered the Health Board's arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the delivery of the Quarters 3-4 Plan.
- 33 We found **the Health Board had good arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the delivery of the operational plans to the Board, albeit that the use of delivery milestones was temporarily stood down which made assessment against delivery difficult.**
- 34 The Health Board updated its COVID-19 Pandemic Governance Framework 2020-21 in October 2020 and shared it with the Board in November 2020. This framework set out the arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the Quarters 3-4 Plan through the Delivery Coordination Group (the DCG). The DCG is chaired by the Director of Planning and Performance and reports to the Gold Group. The DCG may make operational decisions, in line with the Health Board's Scheme of Reservation and Delegation of Powers to Executive Directors. All strategic decisions are reserved for the Gold Group.
- 35 The DCG's role is to oversee delivery of the plan and coordinate actions taken by the Health Board to limit the impact of any business continuity disruption. The DCG coordinates performance monitoring and reporting, communications and engagement, tracking service changes, liaison with the CHC, liaison with commissioned services and the Welsh Ambulance NHS Trust.
- 36 The delivery of the Prevention and Response Plan is overseen by the Prevention and Response Strategic Oversight Group (SOG). Specifically, the SOG receives reports to support oversight of the Test, Trace, Protect and mass vaccination programmes, the performance dashboards situation reports (SITREP), incident management and prevention related activities. The Executive Committee's Delivery and Performance Group is responsible for development and review of performance for provided and commissioned services. High level feedback is provided to the Board as part of the Executive Committee report.
- 37 The Board was updated in January 2021 on progress against delivering the Quarters 3-4 Plan. A detailed performance update was also provided. The documents set out the key achievements against each of the actions within the Quarters 3-4 Plan. However, the previous use of delivery milestones was stood down temporarily to enable a more agile monitoring approach to be taken by the Gold Group. The absence of delivery milestones meant it was not clear whether

actions were on track to be delivered on time or not. Milestones have been reinstated for the Annual Plan 2021-22, but it was also not clear whether actions were complete or more work was needed. Going forward, the progress report would also benefit from providing a summary of mitigating actions where delivery is off track.





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