

# Safer care for Wales

## A manifesto for change

The next Welsh Government will face major challenges improving health and social care services including funding, workforce shortages and reducing waiting lists.

There has been positive action within Wales with the introduction of the [UK allied health professions strategic framework](#) and the [Innovation Delivery Plan](#). However, NHS Wales still has [comparatively poor outcomes](#), access measures and population health in comparison to many other European countries. NHS Wales also has consistently [high waiting lists](#) and missed A&E targets in comparison to England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Alongside increasing pressure to accelerate integration of health and social care and to move to a more preventative approach, the regulatory frameworks underpinning all of this have never been more under the spotlight.

With the right government policies, professional regulation can be an enabler of change and support the safe transformation of the health and social care service, as well as a move to a more collaborative, preventative model of regulation and healthcare.

### Priorities for the next Welsh Government

- 1 Tackle the health & care workforce crisis
- 2 Close the safety gaps
- 3 Support regulation to improve workplace culture and enable a preventative approach

# 87%

of GPs are concerned  
they are unable to provide  
quality and safe care to  
patients

# The overarching issues

## Tackle the health and care workforce crisis

### What is the problem?

- Vacancy rates in NHS Wales jumped from 4.5% (4,277 FTE) in [March 2023](#) to **5.2%** (5,156 FTE) by [March 2025](#). Medical and dental roles have been hit the hardest, with a **9.3%** vacancy rate, whilst nursing and midwifery and health visiting staff groups stood at **3.6%**.
- [Staff sickness rates](#) averaged around **6.2%** over the past year, driven mainly by anxiety, stress and other mental health issues.
- [Discrimination against staff from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds also remains a significant problem](#). This includes reduced opportunities for recruitment and promotion, higher potential for disciplinary action and higher rates of bullying and harassment.

### What can the next Welsh Government do?

- **Develop a robust regulatory strategy to guide decisions on oversight for health professionals** – one that supports the successful delivery of Wales' workforce plan and proactively manages risks arising from workforce changes.
- **Push for a level playing field for the PSA Accredited Registers Programme** – ensuring an equivalent legislative and policy framework to help actively manage risk, including considering mandating registration for critical areas like mental health and healthcare science.
- **Continue momentum on addressing inequalities** – we welcome work to develop a new Workforce Race Equality Standard as part of the Wales Government's Anti-racist Action Plan.



**9.3%** vacancy rates for medical and dental roles in Wales



**6.2%** staff sickness rates, driven mainly by anxiety, stress & other mental health issues



## Close the safety gaps

### What is the problem?

- The public is at risk from unsafe, unregulated non-surgical cosmetic procedures with **70%** experiencing lasting side effects from Botox injections in a [recent survey](#) of consumers who had experienced complications.
- **87%** of [GPs are concerned](#) they are unable to provide quality and safe care to patients.

### What can the next Welsh Government do?

- **Put safety first** – extend the local authority licensing scheme for special procedures to include non-surgical cosmetic procedures.
- **Learn from past mistakes** – create a unified process and accountability mechanism so that learnings from every major review in Wales and across the UK leads to real, measurable change.



**87%** of GPs are concerned they are unable to provide quality and safe care to patients



The public is at risk from unsafe, unregulated cosmetic procedures

# Support regulation to improve workplace culture and enable a preventative approach

## What is the problem?

- Wales has a life expectancy of **77.9** years for males and **81.8** years for females, compared to England's average of 78.8 years for males and 82.8 years for females. People living in the most deprived communities are nearly four times more likely to die from avoidable causes.
- There have also been reports that the system **lacks an open and transparent safety culture** where people feel able to speak up freely and feel respected and valued.
- We are **failing to learn from complaints** about care:  
"I made my complaint very clear. I want action, not words, not... I don't want even the word compensation mentioned. I don't want any of that. I want someone else to get a better standard of care."  
Complainant, Barriers to complaints (PSA research, 2025)

## What can the next Welsh Government do?

- **Accelerate modernisation** – fast track the four-country reform programme to overhaul healthcare professional regulation to allow regulators to support ambitious prevention goals.
- **Demand accountability and consistency** – review accountability and regulatory arrangements for senior leaders and managers and aim for consistent standards across the UK.
- **Joined-up accountability** – support strategic reflection on the right balance between employer and regulator remits and responsibilities.



Wales has a lower life expectancy compared to England



Whistleblowers continue to face ongoing challenges in speaking up

# How can professional regulation help?



- The legislation for several of the regulators we oversee, starting with the General Medical Council (GMC), is due to be modernised. This could enable them to deal with complaints in a more agile, proportionate way – and PSA oversight can help make sure that we don't roll back on public protection during a time of change.
- Many regulators and Accredited Registers are supporting workforce ambitions by sharing data and working to align their regulatory requirements with those of employers. The UK Government has asked all regulators to review their revalidation processes to better support continuous development.
- The PSA is introducing a new unified set of Standards for regulators and Accredited Registers to promote consistency across the regulated and unregulated workforce and support regulators in moving to a more preventative approach, tackling harm before it occurs.
- The new Standards will include a focus on improving access to complaints processes and ensure learning from complaints can help drive regulatory improvements

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## Contact us

If you would like to discuss any of these issues with us or find out more about our work, please get in touch:

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