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Betsi Cadwaladr
University Health Board

Annual Review 2024/25



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Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board Annual Review 2024/25

We are pleased to present the Annual Review for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board for the period 2024/25. This document provides a summary of the full Annual Report and Accounts and offers an important opportunity to reflect on the year's progress, challenges, and the continued commitment of our staff, partners, and communities to improving health and care services across North Wales.

This year has been a pivotal one in the Health Board's journey of progress following being placed into Special Measures in February 2023. While significant challenges remain, we are encouraged by the steady and measurable improvements made across key areas including leadership, governance, clinical quality, and financial management. These gains are the result of considerable focus, discipline, and collaboration throughout the organisation and across our wider health and care system.

Throughout the year, we have taken steps to strengthen the foundations of the Health Board. We have continued to stabilise our leadership structures and are building a culture rooted in transparency, shared responsibility, and continuous learning.

Our clinical teams have worked hard to improve access and outcomes for patients, despite ongoing pressures in workforce availability and service demand. We have seen progress in areas such as planned care recovery, urgent and emergency care pathways, and the delivery of key public health priorities, but we also understand that for many of our population it is access to health and well-being services that remains difficult.

Infrastructure developments have advanced during the year, including the development of a new orthopaedic hub at Llandudno Hospital, with investment in our estate and facilities aimed at supporting the delivery of modern, safe, and effective care. We have also continued to accelerate our digital transformation programme, recognising the role that innovation and technology must play in the future of health and care services. As part of this, work is now underway to implement an electronic healthcare record within our mental health services – a key step in improving coordination, continuity, and the quality of care for patients.

We are proud to have introduced innovative technologies such as robotic-assisted knee surgery, positioning the Health Board at the forefront of modern surgical practice. This development is already enhancing patient outcomes and reducing recovery times, and it reflects our commitment to clinical excellence and innovation.

Our partnerships have strengthened over the last year. Working closely with local authorities, the third sector, patients, and the public, we are reshaping services to better meet the needs of our communities. We are grateful to all those who have engaged with us in shaping the future direction of health and care across the region.

We also acknowledge that challenges remain. Recruiting and retaining staff in some key clinical areas continues to be difficult, and financial pressures persist across the system. These issues will require sustained attention, collaborative effort, and honest conversations about how we collectively prioritise care.

As we look ahead, our priority is to maintain and build on the progress will require continued focus, support from our partners, and a shared commitment to putting the needs of patients and communities first.

We share this Annual Review as both a reflection of what's been achieved over the past year and a clear statement of our direction for the future. We hope you'll take the time to explore its contents, and we welcome your continued support and challenge as we work to rebuild trust, improve outcomes, and deliver safe, high-quality care for the people and communities of North Wales.



Dyfed Edwards, Chair



Carol Shillabeer, Chief Executive

Who we are

The Health Board is the largest health organisation in Wales, with a budget of £2.3 billion and a workforce of 21,100 as of the end of March 2025. The Health Board is an integrated health system that strives for excellent compassionate care delivered in partnership with the public and other statutory and third sector organisations.



We are responsible for the delivery of health care services to more than 700,000 people across the six counties of North Wales (Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham). This includes the provision of primary, community and mental health, as well as general hospital services.

In primary care settings the Health Board delivers NHS care through a combination of independent contractors and directly delivered services across North Wales. This network of primary care services covers 95 medical practices (“GP practices”), 71 dental and orthodontic practices, 70 optometry/optician practices and 144 community pharmacies.

In community settings, the Health Board delivers a wide range of community NHS services including community nursing, health visiting, physiotherapy, and palliative care, through a network of health centres, clinics, community team bases and 17 community hospitals, coordinated across 14 localities.

Community mental health services are delivered from bases across North Wales, supported by inpatient mental health units across the region.

The Health Board also delivers primary, community and mental health services to the prison population within His Majesty’s Prison Berwyn in Wrexham.

General hospital services are provided from three main sites (Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor, Glan Clwyd Hospital in Bodelwyddan and Wrexham Maelor Hospital), with some surgical services also being delivered in Abergele and Llandudno.

Where NHS care cannot be provided within North Wales, such as for certain rare conditions or highly specialist services, the Health Board works with other NHS providers in Wales and England, to ensure that patients can still access the specialist treatments they need.

We are also responsible, in partnership, for improving the health and wellbeing of local people through activities such as our successful vaccination programmes and school health services.

Overview of activity

Here is a snapshot of the services our staff, and contracted partners, delivered during 2024/25.

The majority of patient contacts with health services take place in the community, for example in GP Practices, pharmacies or patients' own homes. A large proportion of this work is performed by independent contractors (such as GP and dental practices that are run by the partners) or private companies (such as high street pharmacies), under contracts with the Health Board.

The latest figure available shows that in 2024/25 there was a continued improvement in the percentage of General Practices that achieved all standards set out in the National Access Standards for in-hours general medical services. The organisation has gone from being the worst performing Health Board in 2020/21 at 59.8% to the second best in 2023/34 at 99%. This level of performance is expected to increase again to fully compliant at 100% when the 2024/25 figures are released.

Community pharmacies have also played a key role in supporting people across North Wales, and GPs, through reducing the number of attendances for medication purposes. Last year, 30,900 pharmacist independent prescribing consultations were carried out compared



with the target of 27,835 and ranked BCU as the best performing health board in Wales with regards to this measure. Also, the number of consultations by pharmacists as part of the Common Ailments Scheme rose to about 8,000 per month in 2024/25 compared to about 5,000 per month in 2022/23.

Hospital services are directly managed and run by the Health Board. During 2024/25, in our hospitals, we saw:

- 242,705 Emergency Department attendances
- 861,080 hospital outpatient attendances
- 41,254 day-case procedures
- 12,164 planned procedures

In 2024/25 there were 5,606 births. This is lower than in 2023 (5,786) and in line with a declining birth rate in North Wales.

Performance overview

The 2024/25 reporting year has been a pivotal period for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, marked by both significant progress and ongoing challenges.

This time last year, the Health Board set out a plan to improve performance across a number of areas that were placed in to the highest level of escalation – Special Measures by the Welsh Government. This plan aimed to address issues around governance and leadership and provide a solid foundation from which the Health Board could then focus its efforts on effectively improving its performance.

A lot has changed and good progress made over the last two years with the establishment of a new Board, governance structure, change portfolio, operating model, culture and strategy. The initial challenge was the appointment and induction of a new Board, led by a new Chair and Chief Executive who have now been in substantive posts since early in 2024. This determined the initial focus and priorities. This was supported by successful recruitment of a full complement of Independent Members and improvement was reflected in the latest Audit Wales evaluation of Board effectiveness. Since then, the Health Board has worked hard on the priorities set by Welsh Government, making progress against the associated de-escalation criteria with support from the Welsh Government.

In 2024/25, the Special Measures actions were incorporated into the Health Board's Annual Delivery Plan in order to have a single plan for the organisation that encompassed all of its priorities. This evolution saw the maturing nature of the Board take shape with a well-functioning Board turning into longer-term ambitions to build an effective organisation.

During this time improvements have been made across a number of areas including the way the Board is led, financial management, governance and quality of care processes.

Other highlights of the past year include:

- Progress in planned care recovery, urgent and emergency care, and public health priorities
- Investment in infrastructure, including a new orthopaedic hub at Llandudno Hospital
- Developed plans for digital innovations, including a successfully funded business case for electronic health records in mental health services
- Introduction of robotic-assisted knee surgery
- Welcoming the first cohort of students to the North Wales Medical School
- Submitting a financially-balanced Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) for the first time
- Strengthened partnerships across the health and care system



Whilst a lot of progress has been made in building the necessary foundations for the organisation to be successful in the long-term, much of this work will take time to fully embed and get right.

The Health Board fully recognises that while getting this foundation right is fundamental to driving forward improvement, people are still waiting too long too often to get the care and support they need. It is crucial our communities have access to the quality of service and support they expect and deserve and now this is where we are focusing our attention.

The Health Board recognises the challenges to building a sustainable organisation for the long-term whilst also addressing some of the shorter-term performance issues. Whilst this will always be difficult to balance, a lot of the organisational building blocks are now in place to support addressing both in parallel. This is the only way the organisation will successfully deliver on its purpose to improve health and wellbeing and provide excellent care to the people of North Wales.

The Health Board is now working with our partners, as well as listening to and learning from the experiences of our patients and communities, to develop the plans we need to develop and deliver high quality, sustainable services for the future.



2024/25 – A snapshot of some of our developments in the year

While it has been another challenging year for the Health Board, we know that every day our staff do amazing things to support our communities across North Wales and each other. It is important for us to recognise and celebrate this incredible effort and to share these stories to help people get a better understanding of the services we provide and how they can access them appropriately.

April 2024: Hepatitis C micro-eliminated at HMP Berwyn thanks to rapid test and treat programme

Hepatitis C has virtually all but been eliminated from HMP Berwyn, the UK's largest prison, following a joint initiative between Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), Public Health Wales and the charity Hepatitis C Trust.



As part of the programme, 100% of prisoners were offered a test, 90% of men were tested, and 90% of those diagnosed with hepatitis C started treatment. This is known as micro-elimination, meaning that within a particular environment, in this case HMP Berwyn, certain requirements for hepatitis C testing and treatment have been reached.

This was achieved through making testing routine, with prisoners being offered a rapid test within days of arriving at the prison, and treatment being quickly provided for those who need it.

May 2024: Our Welsh Language Training Team becomes the first to receive a national special recognition award

The Health Board's Welsh Language Team has received the Work Welsh Employer of the Year 2024 award from the National Centre for Learning Welsh at a recent celebration event.

The team was recognised for its strategic planning, which stood out as excellent, and their innovative and forward-thinking approach to ensure there are Welsh language learning opportunities for the workforce, which has a real impact on patients.

This was the first time the National Centre for Learning Welsh has held such an event and the awards were presented at the Park Plaza Hotel in Cardiff.



June 2024: Renal patient to embark on first trip away in 15 years thanks to mobile dialysis machine

A renal patient was able to go on her first holiday in fifteen years after receiving a mobile dialysis machine that she can easily transport in the back of her car.



Ceri Ann Granton, from Brynsiencyn on Anglesey, has received dialysis treatment since she was 18-years-old after being diagnosed with focal and segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS) as a teenager, which is a disease that can lead to kidney failure, and can only be treated with dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Sadly, Ceri has had two failed attempts at a kidney transplant and is now on permanent dialysis. Up until this point she had needed to visit Ysbyty Gwynedd's Renal Unit four times a week over a number of years.

July 2024: Ysbyty Gwynedd now official training centre for robotic knee surgery

Ysbyty Gwynedd has now officially become the first NHS robotic training centre in Wales to train other surgeons in robotic knee surgery.

The hospital became the first in Wales to perform robotic knee replacements in 2021 using the ROSA system.

Surgeons are able to personalise the knee replacement, which provides operations that are more precise, potentially shorter hospital stays and quicker recoveries.



August 2024: Prehabilitation Unit open for patients needing major cancer surgery to reduce risks and boost recovery

Wrexham Maelor Hospital has opened a new state-of-the-art gym for its cancer patients having major surgery.

The new unit will help ensure patients are fit enough to have their big operation which will also help reduce the risk of complications, improve their recovery and help patients go home earlier following the surgery.



A team of health care professionals including anaesthetists, physiotherapists, exercise physiologists, dietitians, occupational therapists and respiratory physiologists are all involved in designing and supervising a bespoke programme for each patient.

September 2024: New cancer support centre in North Wales breaks ground

A new cancer support centre in North Wales broke ground. The Maggie's centre will be completely commissioned, designed and funded by the Steve Morgan Foundation and is being built in the grounds of Glan Clwyd Hospital in Bodelwyddan, Denbighshire.

The centre will provide free practical, psychological and emotional support for people with cancer, as well as their family and friends, from across the whole region - including Bangor and Wrexham. North Wales sees 4800 people newly diagnosed with cancer every year. It is expected the centre will be open by the end of 2025.



October 2024: New Medical School a "game-changer" for doctor recruitment in North Wales

First Minister Eluned Morgan and Health Secretary Jeremy Miles officially opened the North Wales Medical School.

The first direct intake of medical students started at Bangor University that semester and included a mix of school leavers and graduate entrants. They were the first to have all their medical training delivered in North Wales.

Planning for the new medical school began in 2020, when Bangor University, Cardiff University, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the Welsh Government agreed to work in partnership to set up the school.

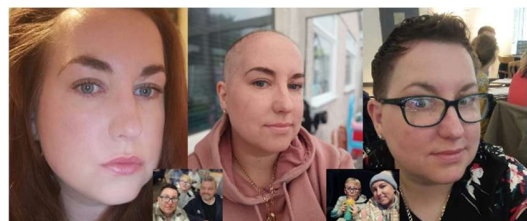


November 2024: Hospital lingerie and swimwear fayre empowering women affected by breast cancer surgery

A hospital lingerie and swimwear fayre showed women affected by breast cancer surgery they don't have to settle for dowdy underwear and swimwear.

The event at Glan Clwyd Hospital brought in well-known suppliers of lingerie and swimwear, designed to show style doesn't have to be sacrificed when choosing post-surgery underwear and beachwear.

It may not seem like an important issue to those who have never experienced breast cancer surgery. However, to many who have, looking and feeling good in comfortable, feminine garments is a part of regaining a sense of self after such life-changing treatment.



December 2024: Young people help create comic strip designs to have a voice on health services

Children and young people have helped design comic strip style graphics and video to help share details about the Health Board's Children's Charter.

The Charter is a set of standards that organisations work to, to make sure children and young people are treated fairly and have a voice, it aims to make sure they are heard in the Health Board about decisions that affect their lives.

The comic strips were created by children and young people in workshops and sessions at youth clubs, which were held to find out what they think of or see when told about the Children's Charter. Videos were created in English and Welsh to help create a visual and more accessible resource, turning jargon into easy to understand information and images, for children and young people to learn about the Children's Charter.



January 2025: New health and social care hub set to come to Denbigh

Following Cabinet approval, Denbighshire County Council agreed to sell the authority's office building in Denbigh to the Health Board. This move will allow the health board to develop a much-needed health and social care hub in the town which will be of significant benefit to the residents of Denbigh and further afield.

Plans for the site are still in development, but the new Hub is likely to include primary care, adult mental health services, a perinatal hub, midwifery service and space for the Community Resource Team. As well as bringing valuable health and social care services to the town, this new wellbeing hub will offer significant social and economic wellbeing benefits to the area.



February 2024: Dementia: Accessing the right support, at the right time

An estimated 11,900 people live with dementia in North Wales, and around 67,000 unpaid carers support loved ones, according to the 2021 Census. The North Wales Memory Support Pathway offers tailored support for people affected by dementia. This includes individuals who are concerned about memory issues, those living with dementia at home or in hospital, and their friends and family.



The service supported 4,700 people in 2023/24, over 1,200 more compared to the previous year. Support is available at every stage of the dementia journey—before, during, and after diagnosis. A collaboration between the six Local Authorities, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, Alzheimer's Society, Carers Trust North Wales, Carers Outreach, and NEWCIS ensures advice and guidance is personalised to meet individual needs.

March 2025: New £29.4m Elective Orthopaedic Hub at Llandudno Hospital takes shape

The external structure of the new £29.4m Elective Orthopaedic Hub is starting to take shape at Llandudno Hospital.

The new hub will transform elective orthopaedic services at Betsi Cadwaladr Health Board and provides benefits for patients, staff and the wider North Wales community, by delivering a planned 1,900 procedures a year.

Specialising in high volume, low complexity care, the dedicated hub will increase annual surgical activity, by providing orthopaedic services away from hospitals, it will reduce the effects unscheduled care can have on elective treatment and reduce the chance of surgeries being postponed.



Get involved

Our main purpose is to improve health and deliver excellent care. We aim to put our patients and our communities at the centre of all that we do.

We want people to feel they are being listened to, and that their views are making a valuable contribution to local health services in North Wales.

There are lots of ways people can get involved in supporting and engaging with the Health Board. This can be through volunteering, partnership working or just keeping up-to-date.

More information about how people can do this can be found in the Get Involved section of the BCUHB website.

Stay Informed

People can keep themselves up-to-date with what the Health Board is doing through the News Section on the BCU website, or by following our social media channels:

- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/BetsiCadwaladr/events>
- **Whatsapp:** <https://bcuhb.nhs.wales/get-involved/follow-us-on-whatsapp/>
- **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/betsicadwaladr/>
- **Health Board's e-newsletter:** Sign up through on the Health Board's website



