

# Structured Assessment 2021 (Phase One) – Operational Planning Arrangements Health Education and Improvement Wales

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# Contents

Summary report	
About this report	4
Key messages	5
Detailed report	
Scope and coverage of the 2020-21 Quarters Three-Four Plan	6
Arrangements for developing operational plans	6
Arrangements for monitoring delivery of operational plans	8

# 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 Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). 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, Social Services and Sport 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 HEIW's planning arrangements for developing the quarters one and two plans. This report considers the planning arrangements underpinning the development of the operational plan for quarters three and four of 2020-21.

## Key messages

- 6 Overall, we found that **HEIW's arrangements for preparing operational plans and monitoring their delivery are robust.**
- 7 HEIW submitted its Quarters 3-4 Plan and relevant Minimum Data Set to the Welsh Government within the specified timeframe. The plan was approved via Chair's action following Board engagement and executive level endorsement. Whilst much of the Welsh Government operating framework does not directly apply to HEIW, it responded positively by converting the framework to fit the organisation's remit and strategic objectives and by setting out its contribution to the COVID-19 response and recovery, and winter planning.
- 8 HEIW's planning arrangements are robust. There was far-reaching engagement with stakeholders despite the time constraints, and a review of strategic objectives in the context of immediate requirements and available resources was undertaken. HEIW has maintained a focus on learning, staff wellbeing and partnership working. HEIW is reviewing planning resource levels as its current capacity is insufficient to deliver its ambition of functioning as a programme management office.
- 9 HEIW has effective arrangements to oversee delivery of its operational plans, which are now embedded in its recently approved Performance Framework. In accordance with that Framework, the Board receives performance reports quarterly.
- 10 We have not made any new 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 HEIW's 2020-21 Quarters Three-Four Plan (the Quarters 3-4 Plan) in line with Welsh Government planning guidance.
- 12 We found that **HEIW's Quarters 3-4 Plan satisfied Welsh Government requirements and was submitted within the required timescale following engagement with Independent Members.**
- 13 HEIW submitted its Quarters 3-4 Plan and relevant Minimum Data Set to the Welsh Government by 19 October 2020. Due to the scheduling of meetings, the plan could not be discussed and approved at a public Board meeting within the required timescale. Instead, it was approved via Chair's action. However, the draft plan was circulated to Independent Members for comment and endorsed by the executive team prior to approval and submission. The Board received the final plan for noting at its November 2020 meeting, with papers available on HEIW's public website.
- 14 The organisation does not deliver frontline NHS services, so much of the Welsh Government's operating framework does not directly apply to HEIW. However, it continued to respond positively to the requirements by converting the framework to fit the organisation's remit and strategic objectives and by setting out its contribution to the COVID-19 response and recovery, and winter planning. For example, it outlines plans to deliver rehabilitation training, improve infection, prevention and control training and its ongoing work to support critical care. HEIW has reviewed the resources needed to deliver the Quarters 3-4 Plan and has also completed the applicable metrics in the supporting Minimum Data Set.

## Arrangements for developing operational plans

- 15 Our work considered HEIW'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.
- 16 We found that **HEIW's planning arrangements are robust, flexible and underpinned by good stakeholder engagement.**
- 17 The Quarters 3-4 Plan is a continuation of the quarters 1 and 2 operational plans. All three plans are rooted in HEIW's approvable 2020-2023 Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP). The plan incorporates the Welsh Government's feedback on the previous plan, which was largely positive and provided suggestions on additional ways HEIW could aid the wider NHS.
- 18 HEIW's planning approach for developing the Quarters 3-4 Plan has not fundamentally changed. Despite the time constraints, stakeholder engagement in developing the plan was extensive, building on the comprehensive stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of the process of developing the 2020-2023 IMTP. The Chief Executive and Director of Workforce engaged early with partners to

discuss priorities, including the chief executives and directors of workforce of all health bodies, Social Care Wales, several Royal Colleges, and the Council of Deans. This was seen as key to sustaining stakeholder confidence in the base-level of engagement. Due to the short turnaround time for the Quarters 3-4 Plan, HEIW staff were not involved in its development. But engagement in developing the 2021-22 annual plan has been more extensive, including wider staff involvement. HEIW is also clear about ongoing stakeholder management such as representation on and chairing national groups, maintaining dialogue and agreements with home nation counterparts, holding online showcase events for partners and keeping HEIW's external website updated for students, trainees, education providers and employers.

- 19 HEIW reviewed its strategic objectives and deliverables in the context of available capacity and additional resources needed to support the Winter Protection Plan. As a result, seven of the original IMTP objectives were deferred and three new objectives added. The new objectives have been developed to help monitor the additional requirements of the Winter Protection Plan and strategic development around healthcare sciences. In addition, the planning process took account of performance against the quarters 1 and 2 operational plans, though this was not reported in the Quarters 3-4 Plan.
- 20 HEIW has ensured flexibility in its Quarters 3-4 Plan by developing separate milestones for quarters 3 and 4. This allows the organisation to be more responsive to changing circumstances and risks, taking remedial action as necessary. The Crisis Management Team (CMT), which meets weekly, uses performance updates and wider information about the NHS response to make decisions about how to respond to current pressures. HEIW has reviewed its CMT membership, which in 2020, was perhaps too large for swift decision making. Positively, HEIW has reflected on this and reconstituted its CMT, establishing two cells to support it.
- 21 As stated above, HEIW's quarterly plans are rooted its 2020-2023 IMTP, which is based on extensive research and engagement. Types of information feeding HEIW's planning assumptions include workforce and student data and trends, health policies, research, and partner engagement.
- 22 The Quarters 3-4 Plan was developed by the Planning, Performance and Corporate Services Team, with executive, senior leadership, and Board support and involvement. The Planning, Performance and Corporate Services Team comprises three officers with a planning remit, including the new director. The team is effective, and roles and responsibilities are clear. However, HEIW is of the view that the current level of resource is insufficient to support its ambition of also functioning as a programme management office. The team's capacity and capability are being reviewed as part of the annual planning process for 2021-22.
- 23 The Quarters 3-4 Plan is explicit about how HEIW will work with its partners and the wider NHS system to deliver its objectives. For example, HEIW has jointly produced a plan with Social Care Wales to maintain a focus on delivering the 2019

Workforce Strategy for Health and Social Care. It also sets out actions for working with Social Care Wales to improve winter resilience in care homes and with the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust to develop an all Wales education and training framework for telephone triage.

- 24 HEIW has maintained a focus on continuous learning and has reviewed new ways of working introduced during the pandemic. Appended to the Quarters 3-4 Plan is a briefing paper highlighting the positive learning from COVID-19, with a focus on what this means for health education and training in Wales. HEIW staff have been consulted about the current working arrangements.

## Arrangements for monitoring delivery of operational plans

- 25 Our work considered HEIW's arrangements for monitoring and reporting on the delivery of the Quarters 3-4 Plan.
- 26 We found that **HEIW has effective arrangements to oversee delivery of its operational plans which are now embedded in its recently approved Performance Framework.**
- 27 As stated above, HEIW's Quarters 3-4 Plan sets out separate milestones for quarters 3 and 4, and those to be deferred to the 2021-22 Annual Plan. The milestones are mapped against the organisation's strategic aims and objectives, providing a clear link to the approvable 2020-2023 IMTP.
- 28 In 2020, we found that the quarter 1 operating plan was regularly reviewed by senior leaders and the Board. For the quarter 2 operating plan, HEIW developed a framework to monitor and track delivery. The same framework has been used to monitor the Quarters 3-4 Plan. In practice, the framework is an operational spreadsheet that the planning team keeps updated in liaison with the relevant senior responsible officers.
- 29 In January 2021, the Board approved HEIW's Performance Framework. This outlines a quarterly cycle for Board reporting, which is better aligned to the annual plan and IMTP milestones. Accordingly, the Board received the quarter 3 performance report in March 2021, which consisted of a narrative report and an accompanying performance dashboard. Following the review of its strategic objectives, HEIW identified which of its strategic objectives to deliver against during quarters 3-4. The performance report shows that at the end of quarter 3, overall, performance is on track. The Board is due to receive the quarter 4/year-end performance report in May 2021.







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