

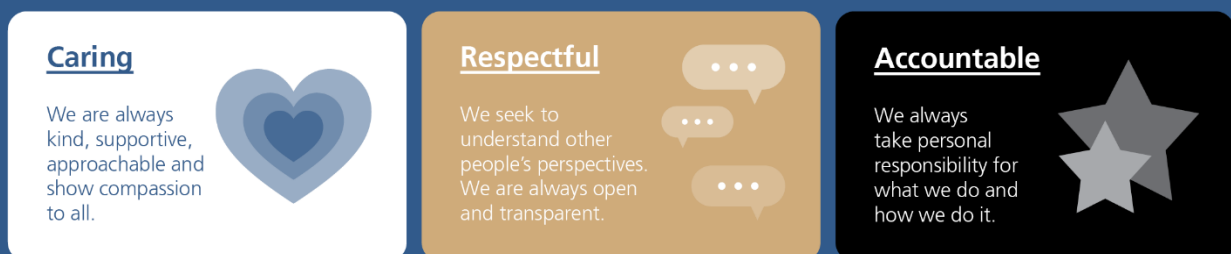
Velindre University NHS Trust  
Deputy Director of OD and Workforce

# Annual Social Partnership Duty Report

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025



Velindre University NHS Trust is responsible for the delivery of a wide range of specialist NHS Wales services including the Velindre Cancer Service and the Welsh Blood Service and we host Health Technology Wales, and NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership.



The Velindre Cancer Service is a specialist treatment, teaching, research and development service for non-surgical tertiary oncology services to patients from across south east Wales and further afield.

The Welsh Blood Service provides essential and highly specialised national services including the collection and production of blood and blood components, specialist diagnostic services and antenatal screening, as well as supporting transplant services for solid organs and stem cells across Wales and internationally.

Health Technology Wales assesses non-medicine health and care technologies and produces national guidance on their use in Wales.

NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership delivers a wide range of professional, technical and administrative services to NHS Wales.

## Introduction

Velindre University NHS Trust is fully committed to fulfilling its Social Partnership Duty under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023. As a public body, we recognise the importance of co-determining policy and decision-making with our recognised trade unions and wider workforce. This report outlines the actions taken during 2024–25 to embed social partnership principles into the Trust’s governance, planning, delivery, and procurement activities.

The duty requires public bodies to engage meaningfully with workforce representatives and other stakeholders to promote fair work, improve well-being, and deliver better public services. The Trust remains committed to fostering collaboration with our workforce, trade unions, and external partners to ensure inclusive decision-making and continuous improvement in health services across the region.

Sustainability and climate action are integral to this approach. We recognise that fair work, social value, and environmental responsibility are interconnected, ensuring that decisions made in partnership today contribute to a healthier, fairer, and more sustainable Wales for future generations.

## Governance and Oversight

### **Social Partnership Structures**

To embed social partnership principles, we have the Local Partnership Forum (LPF).

The LPF is the formal mechanism within the Trust where the trade unions work together with management, to engage, inform, debate and agree local priorities, in respect of workforce and Trust related issues. The broad term used to describe this is “partnership working”. All members of the LPF are full and equal members and collectively share responsibility for the decisions made by the forum.

The LPF provides the formal mechanism for consultation, negotiation and communication between the staff representatives and management. The Trust involves staff representatives in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation at a strategic and operational level and in service decisions, problem solving, service planning, local management meetings and communications. At the earliest opportunity, the organisation engages with staff representatives in all key discussions and decision-making processes.

The LPF adheres to the principles and best practice of partnership working, as derived from 'Partnership Agreement. An agreement between Department of Health, NHS Employers and NHS Trades Unions'. The Local Partnership Forums are supported by Divisional Local Partnership Forums in the Velindre Cancer Service, Welsh Blood Service, Health Technology Wales and NHS Wales Shared Services. The more localised groups ensure matters are discussed and communicated within specific functional areas within the Trust. Representatives from the Divisional groups sit on the Trust wide Local Partnership Forum, ensuring effective flow of communication and management of partnership working.



In addition, the Climate Action Board provides strategic oversight of the Trust's Sustainability Strategy, environmental management system, and decarbonisation plans. The Board brings together representatives from across the organisation, including clinical, operational, and estates teams, alongside trade union representatives, to ensure that decisions reflect the principles of fair work, social partnership, and collective accountability. This inclusive governance structure supports transparent decision-making and ensures that sustainability priorities are informed by those who deliver and experience services every day. The Board also monitors progress against national and local carbon reduction targets, oversees climate adaptation planning, and drives integration of sustainability within corporate and clinical governance frameworks.

The Clinical Sustainability Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) has been established to support sustainable clinical practice through partnership working and staff engagement. By bringing together clinicians, estates teams, sustainability leads, and operational staff, the MDT identifies opportunities to decarbonise care pathways and embed resource efficiency across clinical services. Current initiatives include innovative waste reduction projects such as the partnership with Wales Ape and Monkey Sanctuary, which repurposes cardboard radiotherapy tubes for animal enrichment, and efforts to reduce single-use plastics within laboratory and treatment areas. The MDT has also introduced targeted campaigns to cut paper use across the Trust, focusing on high-usage departments such as Pharmacy. This collaborative approach exemplifies how workforce partnership and social value are central to the Trust's model for sustainable healthcare, ensuring that innovation, well-being, and environmental responsibility are delivered hand in hand.

Via these forums we:

- engage staff, through their representatives, in the key discussions and decisions taking place at senior levels and to provide Trade Union representatives with an opportunity to contribute to decisions of the Trust.
- enable management and staff representatives to propose and discuss issues which affect the workforce.

- provide opportunities for unions to contribute to the Trust’s service delivery plans at an early stage and to consider implications for staff of service reviews and/or organisational change.
- discuss and to appraise in partnership, the Trust’s services and activities against performance targets and to discuss proposals to address resultant issues.
- appraise the trade unions of the financial performance of the Trust.
- inform of any intention by the Trust to begin formal consultation on any issue affecting individual departments or services.
- Ensure regular engagement with local and national workforce advisory groups.

### **Leadership Commitment**

- The Chief Executive and Board members actively champion social partnership principles.
- The Trust Board gained an additional Independent Member in 2024 with a lead role for Equality Diversity and Inclusion.
- The appointment of a designated Social Partnership Lead has taken place. Ongoing operational challenges are being addressed to fully release the individual to undertake the role. The Trust remain committed to ensure the role plays an active part in the leadership of the social partnership agenda.
- Sustainability is embedded within the Trust’s governance framework. The Climate Action Board reports to the Executive Management Board, ensuring accountability for environmental performance, compliance with ISO 14001:2015, and progress toward Net Zero carbon.

## **Key Achievements and Activities**

### **Workforce Engagement and Fair Work**

We have ongoing engagement sessions with staff and trade union representatives to address workforce concerns. As a result, we produce in partnership:

- Staff well-being initiatives: including mental health support and flexible working options. The Trust Health and Wellbeing Plan is progressed via LPF.
- Employee Relations: The LPF were given an overview of employee relations activity, providing assurance of the appropriate management of the employment relationship.

- Recruitment: LPF received updates on workforce performance data highlights the Trust performance in relation to sickness, achievement of Personal Development Appraisal Reviews (PADR) and recruitment actively. This provides a forum for open discussion and debate in relation to the supply of staff and areas within the Trust that requires support.

In 2024–25, we refreshed our Well-being Objectives through a participatory and inclusive process aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. This refresh was delivered via a series of engagement workshops and structured consultation sessions involving over 100 staff members, including trade union representatives, clinical leads, non-clinical staff, volunteers, and wider community stakeholders.



Through this engagement, the Trust was able to:

- Re-affirm our long-term vision in alignment with Destination 2033 and NHS Wales strategic aims.
- Integrate sustainability, decarbonisation, equality, and health equity more clearly within the updated objectives.
- Ensure that the refreshed objectives reflected the diverse views and lived experiences of our staff and the populations we serve.
- Strengthen the role of prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement in how we plan and deliver services.

The result is a new set of well-being objectives that are collectively owned and actively championed across departments. These now underpin major strategies such as our Sustainability Strategy, People Strategy, and Capital Infrastructure Programme.

The introduction of the Self-Administration of Subcutaneous Treatment Programme, developed collaboratively by clinical teams and the Value-Based Healthcare Team, demonstrates the strength of social partnership in innovation. Empowering patients to manage aspects of their care at home reflects workforce-led innovation, improves work-life balance for clinical staff, and aligns with long-term sustainability objectives by reducing travel and resource use.

## Promoting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

We have refreshed our workplan for 2025-26 to support the delivery of our Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2028.

Progress with Welsh Language 5 Year Plan, 'More than just words' has resulted in the following outcomes:

- 89% completion of the Welsh Language Awareness training programme.
- The 'Active Offer' is delivered in WBS and VCS through the active Welsh Language Groups
- Training has been delivered to staff in front-facing roles such as Reception.
- Rigorous assessment of Welsh language needs at recruitment

The Trust's ongoing collaboration with Menter Rhondda Cynon Taf and establishment of a Welsh Language Discussion Group exemplify how social partnership extends to cultural inclusion. Through informal sessions, staff improve confidence in using Welsh in everyday interactions, reinforcing the Active Offer and promoting a more inclusive workplace culture.

We have used the results of the NHS Staff Survey and Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) to better understand the experience of staff across the Trust and a review into Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination highlighted the need for psychological safety; and this has been adopted as a topic for the improvement work for 2025. Divisions and Departments have been enabled to involve staff in reviewing their results and formulating actions to increase engagement and they are now coming forward with concrete actions for change at a local level.

The focus on Attraction and Resourcing has allowed us to improve access to our employment in a variety of ways:

- Changed our recruitment practices to connect with groups who may not have accessed NHS employment in the past.
- Embedded actions from Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan and National Workforce Policy Audit
- Updated recruitment process to ensure reasonable adjustments are in place for candidates at interview
- Achieved Disability Confident Leader status



- Provision of feedback to unsuccessful candidates on request
- Analysed trac data for all reported protected characteristics and fed findings into future recruitment plans.

The Trust's Equality, Diversity and Organisational Development Manager leads regular communications marking religious holidays, creating safe forums for discussion, peer support, and learning. This work directly supports the objective to recognise that inclusive, psychologically safe working environments contribute to both individual and organisational well-being.

We have established six Staff Networks with structured Terms of Reference and links to the Healthy and Engaged Steering Group, as follows.

- Race Network is linked to the national programme on Global Ethnic Majority employment
- LGBTQ+ Network involved in Pride events and raising the profile of equality
- Neuro Diversity network requested training in working with ND, either one's own or a colleague's
- Disability Network contributed to a study on the use of Reasonable Adjustments in the Trust
- Carers' Network is supporting the implementation of the Carer's Passport.
- The Women's Network is in place and will consider the findings of a Trust report on 'Women in STEM'

## Sustainable Public Services and Procurement

The Trusts approach to procurement is increasingly shaped by our commitment to social value, sustainability, and ethical sourcing, as required under the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act.

- Embedded fair work and social value criteria into procurement processes.
- Partnered with local suppliers to support community wealth-building.
- Ensured ethical employment practices across contracted services.



Circular economy initiatives, like the Walking Aid Recycling Scheme at Velindre Cancer Centre, reduce emissions and NHS resource use. Returned walking aids are cleaned and reused, reducing procurement need and carbon emissions. Developed in partnership with Men’s Sheds and Walters UK using felled trees from the New Cancer Centre (nVCC) site, this project represents an integrated solution to waste, rehabilitation, and community engagement. It also demonstrates collaboration between capital, clinical and voluntary sector teams — and is being scaled through the All-Wales Spread and Scale Academy.

Velindre continues to act as an anchor institution by embedding social value into all that we do. Our Community Benefits schemes attached to major capital programmes ensure that workforce development, inclusive employment, and community health are considered through a social partnership lens. The Community Benefits Governance Board was formed and has successfully funded local community projects. The Board is comprised of partnerships with community groups and voluntary sector organisations have enabled co-creation of site infrastructure using sustainable, locally sourced materials.

The Trust also collaborate with staff and community groups on initiatives such as Ray of Light – a cancer support programme co-developed with patients, staff, and third-sector organisations, enhancing wellbeing and resilience through nature-based activities. The Trust’s partnership with Ray of Light Cancer Support provides nature-based and therapeutic programmes support holistic care by addressing physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Initiatives like the maintenance of pollinator-friendly habitats, wildflower planting, and the staff-led beehive at Talbot Green promote biodiversity and reconnect staff and patients with nature. Our partnership with Ray of Light Cancer Support has grown to include Social and Therapeutic Horticulture sessions, directly supporting patients through meaningful engagement with the natural world. These initiatives reflect long-term thinking by investing in the environment and well-being, and they embody integration by linking green spaces with clinical and therapeutic services. Through involvement, patients and staff co-produce these spaces and activities, ensuring they meet real needs.

As part of the Hefyd programme, the Trust's Sustainability Team, together with the new Velindre Cancer Centre Project Team, continue to hold Sustainable Jamborees for patients, staff and local community engagement. The Sustainable Jamborees held across summer, autumn and spring—bringing together staff, patients and local communities through events that promote well-being, climate literacy, biodiversity awareness and creativity. A range of different activities were hosted including arts & crafts for the local community, habitat home building and biodiversity themed activities. To engage with as many service users, staff and members of our local community as possible, it was important that we engaged in a variety of different ways in both Welsh & English.

The Sustainable Jamborees held across the year provided a platform for staff, patients, and community partners to come together through arts, sustainability, and biodiversity activities. These events showcased how inclusive engagement and creativity can strengthen climate literacy, community cohesion, and workforce morale – demonstrating the practical delivery of social partnership in action.



The Trust's Arts in Health programme supports patient wellbeing through creative engagement, aligning with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act by applying the five ways of working—long-term impact, prevention, integration, collaboration, and involvement. Projects include a partnership with St Fagans National Museum of History, where a pilot social prescribing course for patients with cancer has evolved into Anadlu, a regular mindful walking and creative support group. Ongoing initiatives such as the BBC National Orchestra of Wales' on the Wards, opera performances, weekly Art Cart sessions, and poetry engagement foster connection, emotional expression, and therapeutic benefits. This work contributes to the well-being goals of A Healthier Wales, A More Equal Wales, A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language, and A Wales of Cohesive Communities.

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

### Challenges

- Balancing operational demands with release of key personnel to support meaningful engagement and leadership.
- Ensuring consistency in partnership working across departments.
- Addressing recruitment and retention challenges within the workforce.

### Lessons Learned

- Early and continuous engagement to ensure more effective policy implementation.
- Strong leadership commitment is critical to fostering a culture of partnership.
- Embedding fair work and social value in procurement requires ongoing supplier engagement.

## **Future Priorities**

- Strengthen engagement with frontline staff and trade union representatives.
- Continue to expand partnership working with third-sector organisations and community groups.
- Enhance training on social partnership principles for all staff.
- Develop a monitoring framework to measure the impact of social partnership initiatives.

## **Conclusion**

Despite challenges, Velindre University NHS Trust remains committed to upholding the principles of social partnership, ensuring that our workforce and stakeholders play an active role in shaping the future of healthcare in Wales. Through continuous engagement, collaboration, and shared decision-making, we aim to improve working conditions, enhance service quality, and deliver better health outcomes for the people of Wales.

Our collective commitment to sustainability, climate action and the arts ensures that our actions today support a greener, fairer, and more compassionate future where environmental responsibility, cultural vitality, and workforce well-being are inseparable foundations of excellent care.

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