

Operational Plan 2025-2026



Contents

3 About us

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) is the independent inspectorate and regulator of health care in Wales.



4 Foreword

This Operational Plan outlines the priorities and actions we have set for ourselves to support delivery of our work.

5 Priority 1

We will focus on the quality of healthcare provided to people and communities as they access, use and move between services.

6 Priority 2

We will adapt our approach to ensure we are responsive to emerging risks to patient safety.

7 Priority 3

We will work collaboratively to drive system and service improvement within healthcare.

8 Priority 4

We will support and develop our workforce to enable them, and the organisation, to deliver our priorities.



About us

Our purpose is:

To check that healthcare services are provided in a way which maximises the health and wellbeing of people.



We regulate and inspect independent healthcare services in Wales.

We inspect NHS services in Wales.



We undertake a programme of reviews to look in depth at national or more localised issues.

We monitor concerns and safeguarding referrals.



We take regulatory action to ensure registered independent healthcare services meet legislative requirements.



We recommend improvements, immediate and longer term, to NHS services and independent healthcare services.

Our goal is:

To be a trusted voice which influences and drives improvement in healthcare.



We have a team of 87 staff who work for us, across Wales, supporting our functions and undertaking our assurance work.

We have a team of specialist peer reviewers who we continually recruit to provide specialist, up to date knowledge about services and quality standards.



We have specialists in Mental Health Act Administration and a panel of psychiatrists who provide our Second Opinion Appointed Doctor (SOAD) service.

We have a panel of Patient Experience Reviewers and Experts by Experience to capture the voice of patients out on inspection.



Foreword

Welcome to our Operational Plan for 2025-2026.



Alun Jones
Chief Executive
Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

“Our inspection and assurance programme will remain flexible and responsive, ensuring that we check the right services, in the right place, at the right time.”

At Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), our role is to check that people in Wales are receiving safe, high-quality healthcare. We do this by listening to patients and healthcare staff, inspecting and regulating services, and working with others to drive meaningful improvements.

Our 2025-2026 Operational Plan builds on the strong foundations of our existing [strategy](#), which we have extended by one year. Over the coming year, we will continue to focus on key priorities that help us achieve our goal of improving healthcare for everyone in Wales.

Our Approach in 2025-2026

We will take a balanced, risk-based approach to our work, prioritising areas where patient safety is most at risk. Our inspection and assurance programme will remain flexible and responsive, ensuring that we check the right services, in the right place, at the right time. We will continue to deliver our statutory responsibilities, including our work under the Mental Health Act, the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (IR(ME)R), and independent healthcare regulations.

We understand that healthcare delivery involves a wide range of services, and we are committed to ensuring our work reflects the broader healthcare landscape, focusing on the overall quality of care. We will also strengthen our focus on the experiences of people from diverse communities, challenging inequalities in healthcare access and outcomes.

Adapting to Emerging Risks

The healthcare landscape in Wales is constantly evolving, and we must evolve with it. Over the past few years, we have developed more flexible assurance and inspection models, allowing us to adapt quickly

to emerging risks. We will continue to refine these approaches, using intelligence and collaboration with partners to identify and address the most pressing risks to patient safety.

As part of this, we will modernise the way we share our findings and insights, making sure that healthcare providers, policymakers, and the public can access and act on our recommendations. By strengthening our engagement and communication, we aim to drive improvement across the entire healthcare system.

Investing in Our People

None of this would be possible without our dedicated and highly skilled workforce. Over the next year, we will continue to invest in our staff, ensuring they have the skills, knowledge, and support needed to carry out their work. We will also enhance our internal processes, embedding a culture of continuous learning and quality improvement internally.

Looking Ahead

People are at the heart of everything we do, and we remain committed to listening, learning, and acting, to improve healthcare in Wales. As we move forward, we will continue to adapt, collaborate, and challenge ourselves to be the best organisation we can be.

We welcome feedback and engagement from everyone who shares our desire to help shape a safer, more equitable, and higher-quality healthcare system for all. If you have feedback about healthcare services in Wales, please get in touch.

Together, we can help shape a safer, more equitable, and higher-quality healthcare system for all.

Alun Jones
Chief Executive
Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Priority 1

We will focus on the quality of healthcare provided to people and communities as they access, use and move between services.



Strategic Actions

We will consider the quality of care given to people during their time on a clinical pathway.

We will seek out opportunities to listen to people about what matters to them on their healthcare journey.

We will build on our approach to exploring care delivered both in and outside of a hospital setting, recognising that many people receive care in the community.

2025-2026 Actions

Deliver regulation and assurance activities across independent healthcare, ensuring compliance with standards and regulations.

Deliver a risk-based assurance and inspection programme in the NHS, driven by intelligence.

Undertake assurance work within offender healthcare services, working with other inspectorates and stakeholders as appropriate.

Priority 2

We will adapt our approach to ensure we are responsive to emerging risks to patient safety.



Strategic Actions

We will build on the flexible models of assurance and inspection work that we developed during the pandemic, using all tools available to us to help us carry out our work.

We will use our internal intelligence function and our work with others to direct our work at areas of highest risk.

We will build on our engagement methods, so that we can communicate our messages quickly to drive improvement.

2025-2026 Actions

Review the process for managing concerns raised with us regarding healthcare providers.

Review statutory notification processes to ensure clearer guidance and stronger regulatory oversight.

Develop processes to systematically capture intelligence and generate insights on services based on patient risk.

Ensure our internal risk and escalation processes lead to action where there are concerns around quality and safety standards.

Monitor the progress and impact of our Joint Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Develop a new four-year strategy for HIW, which considers key policy and legislative developments impacting healthcare in Wales.

Priority 3

We will work collaboratively to drive system and service improvement within healthcare.



Strategic Actions

We will work with others to strengthen our understanding of the issues affecting healthcare services and the people and communities who use them.

We will specifically consider the challenges faced by minority groups when using healthcare services, using this understanding to help challenge healthcare inequalities through our work.

We will build on our working relationships with partners so that we increase the impact we can make to the quality of healthcare delivered to the people of Wales.

2025-2026 Actions

Implement a new approach for engaging with NHS Health Boards in Wales.

Enhance and diversify the methods and tools for sharing findings and insights with stakeholders, healthcare providers, and the public.

Improve collaboration with partner agencies to effectively deliver HIW's role in assuring the quality of mental health and learning disability detention services.

Improve the delivery of our Second Opinion Appointed Doctor (SOAD) service within Mental Health settings.

Strengthen collaboration and foster new partnerships with key stakeholders to share intelligence on patient safety and risk.

Engage with and develop HIW's Stakeholder Advisory Group to actively inform and influence our work.

Collaborate with Care Inspectorate Wales to review the approach for conducting joint inspections of Community Mental Health Teams and Community Learning Disability Teams.

Priority 4

We will support and develop our workforce to enable them, and the organisation, to deliver our priorities.



Strategic Actions

We will continue to invest in developing the skills and knowledge of our staff.

We will build on the learning culture we have put in place, ensuring that evaluation and reflection is a core approach to our work.

We will embed our quality governance strategy so that it is at the heart of everything we do.

2025-2026 Actions

Continue to strengthen and build on lessons learned sessions for staff, reflecting on the delivery and impact of our work.

Continue to embed quality processes across HIW to ensure that there is a focus on continuous improvement.

Review and strengthen our existing approach to recruiting, retaining, and engaging external reviewers.

Provide focused learning and development opportunities for staff to enhance performance, delivery, and well-being.

Resourcing

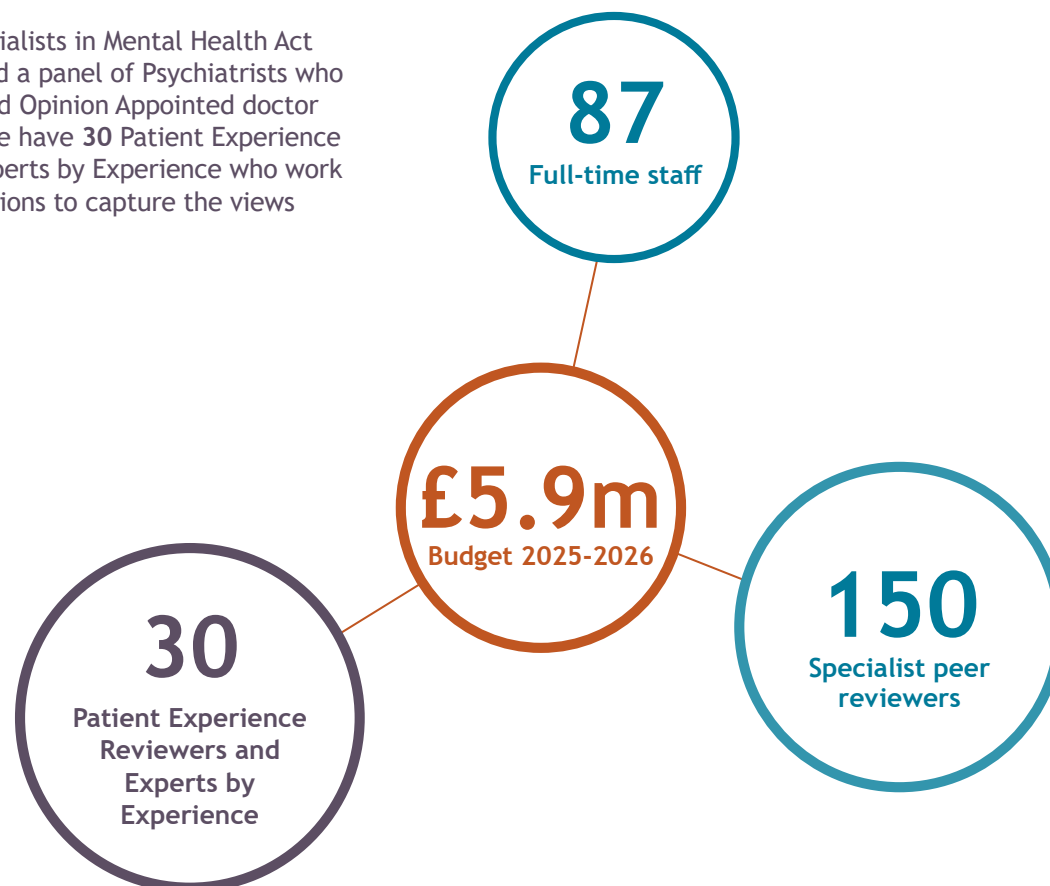
In line with other public sector organisations, we expect to experience budgetary pressures in the coming year.

For 2025-2026 we have a budget of approximately **£5.9m**.

We have posts equivalent to **87** full-time staff, as well as a panel of over **150** specialist peer reviewers.

We also have specialists in Mental Health Act Administration and a panel of Psychiatrists who provide our Second Opinion Appointed doctor (SOAD) service. We have **30** Patient Experience Reviewers and Experts by Experience who work with us on inspections to capture the views of patients.

Team	Posts
Business Management, Digital, and Corporate Services	20
Clinical advice (including SOAD service)	7
Inspection	22
Partnerships, Intelligence, and Methodology	12
Regulation and Escalation	17
Senior Executive	3
Strategy and Communications	6
Total	87



Contact us

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales
Welsh Government
Rhydycar Business Park
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1UZ

By email: hiw@gov.wales
By phone: **0300 062 8163**

www.hiw.org.uk

Find us on:

