

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Operational Plan 2026-2027

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hiw | Healthcare Inspectorate Wales



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About Us

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

Our Purpose

We check the safety and quality of healthcare across Wales.

Our Vision

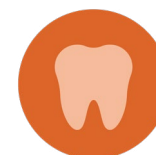
A future where healthcare in Wales is safe, effective, and high-quality for everyone.

We:

- Register, regulate and inspect independent healthcare services, taking enforcement action where standards are not met.
- Inspect NHS services across Wales to ensure quality, safety, and effectiveness.
- Undertake national reviews to explore key issues in depth and drive improvement.
- Monitor concerns and safeguarding referrals, acting swiftly where risks are identified.
- Recommend improvements – both immediate and long-term – to strengthen care across independent and NHS sectors.
- Take regulatory enforcement action to ensure independent healthcare providers meet legislative requirements.

Our work is delivered by:

- A dedicated team of staff based across Wales, supporting our assurance and regulatory functions.
- Specialist Peer Reviewers, recruited continuously to provide up-to-date expertise on services and quality standards.
- A panel of Patient Experience Reviewers and Experts by Experience to capture the voice of patients out on inspection.
- A panel of Independent Consultant Psychiatrists who deliver our Second Opinion Appointed Doctor service.



Foreword

Welcome to our Operational Plan 2026-2027.



Alun Jones

Chief Executive

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

“By working together, we will help shape a safer, more effective and more compassionate healthcare system for Wales.”

At Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW), we check that people in Wales receive safe, high quality healthcare. We do this by listening to people’s experiences, inspecting and regulating services, and working with partners to support meaningful and lasting improvement.

This Operational Plan is the first to be shaped by our new **Strategy for 2026 – 2030**. It builds on strong foundations and focuses on what matters most to people and communities. By setting out clear actions, the plan provides a practical route for delivering the objectives in our Strategy.

Our priorities are informed by the risks, challenges and opportunities across the healthcare system, driving improvement and high-quality care.

We will maintain a balanced, risk based approach across all our functions, adapting as the healthcare landscape evolves. Our work will remain flexible and responsive, ensuring we inspect the right services at the right time. We will continue to meet our statutory responsibilities, including those under the Mental Health Act, the Ionising Radiation (Medical Exposure) Regulations (IR(ME)R) and independent healthcare regulations.

Putting People First

This year, we will strengthen how people’s experiences shape our work. By deepening our understanding of what matters to individuals and communities, we will focus on the greatest risks people face when using and accessing care.

We will improve how we gather and use intelligence, refine our approach to inspection and reporting, and challenge inequalities, so all voices are heard.



Learning and Working Together

Effective improvement depends on strong partnerships. We will build on our relationships across the healthcare system, sharing intelligence and collaborating on national issues. By working closely with services, regulators and oversight bodies, we will support shared understanding of risks and help drive system wide learning. We will also strengthen how we follow up our work so that our findings lead to timely improvements.



Investing in Our People

Our impact relies on the capability and wellbeing of our staff. Over the coming year, we will continue to embed a culture of reflection and continuous development. We will invest in digital tools, training, clear development pathways and cross team learning to support efficient, collaborative working. We will also continue to build an inclusive workplace guided by our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy**.

Taking Action that Matters

We will continue to take clear, proportionate and transparent action to improve the quality and safety of healthcare in Wales. This includes strengthening our inspection and regulatory approaches, improving the clarity of our recommendations, and communicating enforcement decisions effectively. We will enhance how we listen and respond to concerns, including whistleblowing, ensuring people understand what action we have taken.

Across all four priorities, our focus remains on being a trusted, independent voice that supports improvement across the healthcare system. We are grateful to our staff, peer reviewers, partners and stakeholders for their continued commitment.

By working together, we will help shape a safer, more effective and more compassionate healthcare system for Wales.

Alun Jones

Chief Executive

Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

Priority 1

Putting People First

We will focus on the biggest risks facing people and communities as they access healthcare services now and in the future.



Objectives

Better understand lived experience throughout the patient journey, including care access, quality, and how well services work together.

Improve how we carry out and report our work to make it easier for services to learn and take action.

Research and apply inclusive and innovative methods to engage with the public, healthcare staff, and partner organisations.

Improve how we use and share intelligence on patient risks across our teams to inform our assurance work.

Proactively challenge inequalities and ensure people's voices shape our work and the future of healthcare.

Strengthen public awareness of our role, powers, and purpose, ensuring people know how to contact us and what to expect when they do.

Priority 1

Putting People First

We will focus on the biggest risks facing people and communities as they access healthcare services now and in the future.



2026-2027 Actions

- Deliver regulation and inspection activities across independent healthcare, ensuring compliance with standards and regulations.
- Deliver a risk-based assurance and inspection programme in the NHS, driven by intelligence.
- Review how we assess the Welsh Language Active Offer across our assurance activity, sharing good practice where we find it.
- Scope a clinically informed assurance approach for primary and community care, considering the patient journey.
- Develop and implement a new approach to check the quality and safety of NHS and healthcare services, starting with work on maternity and neonatal care.
- Review and strengthen our reporting and sharing of findings from independent healthcare providers.
- Improve how we share intelligence across teams and with key partners, so we have a stronger, shared understanding of risks in healthcare services.
- Improve how we identify and consider health inequality risks in our planning and assurance work.
- Continue to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our assurance work and routinely review our tools and guidance with stakeholder input.
- Use a range of diverse engagement methods to raise awareness of HIW and our role.

Priority 2

Learning and Working Together

We will collaborate with partners to share learning and drive lasting improvements.



Objectives

Build strong, effective partnerships to share insights and support improvement across healthcare services.

Collaborate with others to address national issues impacting healthcare.

Follow up on our work in a timely way to ensure our findings drive improvement.

Plan and deliver an intelligence-led programme of reviews-based work that reflects healthcare priorities and focuses on what matters most to people.

Ensure patients, carers and frontline healthcare staff are actively involved in our work, including planning, delivery and evaluation.

Priority 2

Learning and Working Together

We will collaborate with partners to share learning and drive lasting improvements.



2026-2027 Actions

- Monitor the progress and impact of the new approach for engaging with NHS Health Boards in Wales.
- Implement an improved format for the national Healthcare Summit to identify system-wide themes affecting patient safety, care quality and NHS performance.
- Participate in joint inspection activity and intelligence sharing with key stakeholders, including offender healthcare services, to address national issues impacting healthcare.
- Begin work to strengthen Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) reporting, including exploring options for improved data capture.
- Review our three-month follow-up process to ensure we report our findings in a timely way and identify whether any changes to timescales or approach are needed.
- Progress the national review on access to primary care for people with learning disabilities.
- Share key themes from our findings through learning events to support improvement across independent healthcare services.
- Develop communication channels, using our Stakeholder Advisory Group, events and digital platforms, to support meaningful engagement with patients, carers and frontline staff.

Priority 3

Investing in Our People

We will ensure our people feel supported, valued, and empowered.



Objectives

Embrace innovation and adoption of digital tools to increase our impact and efficiency.

Create a culture of reflection and learning, where we challenge ourselves to continually improve.

Measure the impact of internal changes to ensure they lead to meaningful improvements for our people and the way we work.

Provide clearer development pathways and ensure our staff have the tools they need to work effectively.

Build on the implementation of our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, supporting an inclusive culture.

Priority 3

Investing in Our People

We will ensure our people feel supported, valued, and empowered.



2026-2027 Actions

- Ensure our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is fit for purpose, enabling accurate data capture and effective planning to support our core functions.
- Adopt innovative digital tools and provide the training and support needed to ensure all teams can use them confidently and effectively.
- Create a culture of reflection and learning, improving access to learning and development, and reviewing induction so new staff are equipped for their roles.
- Measure the impact of internal changes and strengthen continuous improvement through lessons-learnt activity.
- Strengthen our approach to recruiting and utilising clinical peer reviewers, ensuring we draw on reviewers with the right skills and experience for our work.
- Update our training programme for peer reviewers to ensure the clinicians who work with us get valuable development and experience.
- Strengthen development and training for our specialist mental health peer reviewers to support their revalidation requirements.
- Establish opportunities for staff to spend time in other teams to develop skills and knowledge, helping build organisational resilience.
- Build on our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy by monitoring progress, aligning with related policies, and working with stakeholders to inform and influence our activity.
- Deliver our Second Opinion Appointed Doctor (SOAD) service within Mental Health settings, taking account of updates to the Mental Health Act legislation.

Priority 4

Taking Action that Matters

We will take action to improve the quality and safety of healthcare for the future of Wales.



Objectives

Regulate and inspect healthcare services using clear, fair, and innovative methods.

Take decisive enforcement action when care falls short, holding providers to account.

Review and adapt our assurance methods to reflect the needs of a modern, evolving healthcare system.

Strengthen how we listen and respond to concerns, including through our whistleblowing channels, to protect people and support improvement.

Publish clear information about what action we have taken and the impact it has achieved.

Priority 4

Taking Action that Matters

We will take action to improve the quality and safety of healthcare for the future of Wales.



2026-2027 Actions

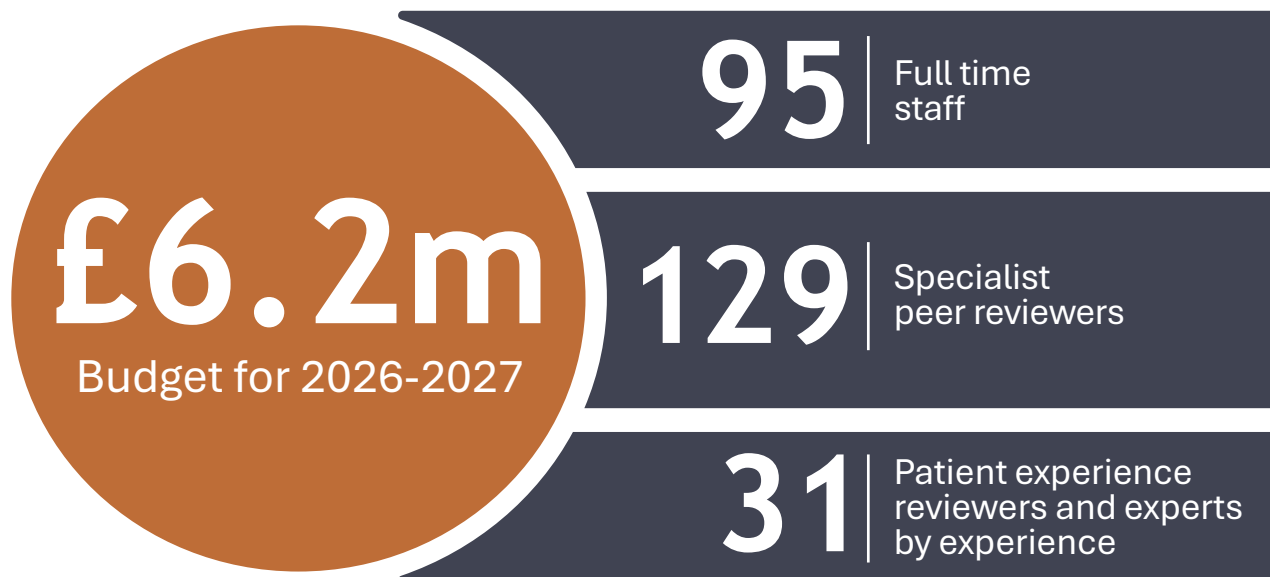
- Review the updated registration process to ensure it is working efficiently and make any necessary adjustments to support the new approach.
- Ensure timely, high-quality, evidence-based acute and mental clinical advice is available to support HIW in carrying out its inspection and regulation functions.
- Review our escalation processes and strengthen our approach to identifying and responding to unregistered healthcare services.
- Develop and deliver a training programme for peer reviewers on methodology.
- Advance efforts to influence and shape changes to the legislative framework and fee structure for independent healthcare and adapt our approach.
- Strengthen our process for managing concerns, including whistleblowing, raised with us about the care people receive.
- Introduce regular reporting on themes and issues emerging from concerns raised with us.
- Publish clear, bilingual and accessible information, using multiple formats to ensure everyone can understand what we do and the difference we make.
- Review and update the statutory notifications guidance for private dental practices.

Resourcing

For 2026-2027 we have a budget of approximately £6.2m. We have posts equivalent to 95 full-time staff, including three secondments, as well as a panel of over 129 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 31 Patient Experience Reviewers and Experts by Experience who work with us on inspections to capture the views of patients.

Team	Number of posts
Senior Executive	3
Inspection	24
Regulation and Escalation	18
Partnerships, Intelligence and Methodology	13
Strategy and Communications	6
Clinical Advice (including SOAD service)	7
Business Management, Digital, and Corporate Services	21
Secondments (temporary staff on loan from other organisations)	3
Total	95





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Healthcare Inspectorate Wales

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