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Ymddiriedolaeth Brifysgol GIG
Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru
Welsh Ambulance Services
University NHS Trust

Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust

Social Partnership Report 2025

Introduction

Since 1 April 2024, Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust has been subject to the Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act (SPPP Act). This means that the organisation is required to seek consensus and compromise with our recognised trade unions when setting wellbeing objectives and making decisions of a strategic nature about the steps the organisation intends to take to deliver those objectives.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate the following in line with the requirements set out by the Minister.

- Where a public body has set well-being objectives during the reporting period, evidence that it has sought consensus or compromise with its workforce (through its recognised trade unions or representatives of staff) in relation to these, and the outcome of that process;
- Where a public body has taken decisions of a strategic nature in relation to the reasonable steps it intends to take to meet those well-being objectives during the reporting period, evidence of it having sought consensus or compromise with its workforce in relation to these, and the outcome of that process; and
- Whether each public body's annual report has been agreed with its workforce, and if not, the reasons why agreement was not reached.

In addition to the above, the Social Partnership Council has advised that the following areas could be included in the report.

- how frequently an employer met with trade unions as part of their Social Partnership duty,
- whether training was provided for employees and trade union representatives on how the Social Partnership duty was to be/being implemented at that organisation; and,
- any examples of where activity is progressing well in the reporting period, including case studies

Developing WAST's Wellbeing Objectives

WAST has been working in the spirit of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (WBFGA) since 2015, however the organisation came formally under the act on 30 June 2024.

The Trust's wellbeing objectives were published on 31st March 2025 as part of its duties under the WBFGA. The objectives reinforce the commitment to staff, patients and communities across Wales.

These new objectives were delivered in partnership with the trade unions who were fully engaged in the development work. An objective under the socially responsible and inclusive employer references valuing partnerships with Trade Unions (TU) and working in partnership to create an organisation that is welcoming, fair and where people can thrive.

The Trust's Wellbeing Objectives can be found below:

Objective 1: A Socially Responsible and Inclusive Employer

We will:

- Support communities and the economy by providing long term employment and volunteering opportunities for people living across Wales, at all points in their career and in a wide variety of roles.
- Continue to develop a diverse and expertly trained workforce so that our communities feel well supported and engaged in our organisation.
- Be an inclusive employer, reflecting the communities we serve across Wales.
- ***Value our partnerships with trade unions and work in partnership to create an organisation that is welcoming, fair and where people can thrive.***

Objective 2: An Innovative and Sustainable Organisation

We will:

- Be at the forefront of clinical care by harnessing technology in a way that minimises our environmental impact and improves patient safety and experience.
- Make the most of our University Trust Status (UTS) to work with commercial and academic partners to look for tomorrow's solutions, today.
- Continue to reduce our environmental impact, using more sustainable and carbon neutral solutions in our estate, fleet and working practices, to ensure we contribute to a greener, cleaner and healthier Wales.
- Manage our financial and physical assets well, so that we can provide viable services for the long term and so communities can rely on us to be there when they need us.

Objective 3: A Pro-active, Accessible and Equitable Care Provider

We will:

- Provide urgent and emergency care services that meet the needs of the people of Wales, wherever and whenever they are needed, improving outcomes and ensuring people can live healthier lives for longer.
- Continually improve our services and performance, so the people of Wales have trust and confidence in our ability to be there when they need us most.
- Co-produce with our communities and partners models of care that continue to meet the evolving needs of people in Wales and reflect what matters to them.
- Help make Wales a nation of lifesavers by supporting health education and promoting bystander CPR skills, improving community resilience.
- Embrace our cultural role as Wales' national ambulance service, championing our language and heritage while develop pioneering new ways of delivering care which position Wales as a leader on the national and international stage.

The development of our objectives has been done in social partnership, with TU partners participating in the task and finish group set up to develop the objectives.

The objectives were also tested through the Integrated Medium Term Plan (IMTP) engagement process including trade union partner representation, through a Board Development session and through a digital engagement process with staff and the public prior to moving through internal governance processes for formal approval. WAST also have TU partners throughout our Committee structures and Board where the wellbeing objectives were presented.

The Director of Partnerships and Engagement has also presented the objectives to WASPT (Welsh Ambulance Services Partnership Team) meeting. The final version of the objectives were reshared with TU partners at the meeting on 28 March 2025 before publication on 31st March.

Next steps on Wellbeing Objectives

Having agreed WAST's wellbeing objectives through consultation and in partnership. 2025-2026 will see work to embed the objectives across the organisation, in particular, the use them as the lens through which decisions are made. We will also begin assessing our organisation against the WBFGA organisational maturity matrix and develop our approach to adaptation planning.

Embedding Social Partnership in WAST

WAST has invested significant time and resources into working in partnership in recent years on order to move to a more collaborative approach.

Significant efforts over the past two and a half years have built a stronger working relationship between the organisation and trade union partners.

Engaging with TU partners in WAST

Engagement with TU partners is through a range of formal and informal structures.

Formal Structures

Board and all Committees have TU attendance at the meetings and TU partners are invited and encouraged to participate in debates and discussions.

In terms of meeting structures, the refreshed formal engagement sessions have been running for around 18 months where, post the organisation's COVID cell approach, the structures and governance arrangements were redeveloped and implemented. The structure arrangements are outlined below.

All forums have agreed terms of reference and there is an intention to discuss issues at the appropriate level, either, locally, regionally or nationally across the service.

The Welsh Ambulance Services Partnership Team (WASPT) is a bi-monthly meeting attended by the senior TU partners from the four recognised TUs, GMB, RCN, UNITE and UNISON and Executive Leadership Team colleagues. It is jointly chaired and is a subgroup of the People and Culture Committee. A copy of the WASPT Annual Report has been provided as an appendix to this report.

Beneath this group is the Senior Leadership Team / TU partnership group (SLT/TUP) and the Corporate Partnership Forum (CPF). These groups meet monthly. SLT/TUP discuss work collaboratively on issues affecting Operations and the CPF agenda includes a range of areas including matters related to corporate wide people issues, planning and strategy, capital and estates, finance, wellbeing, quality and patient safety.

At a service level there are a range of local partnership forums to cover all business areas with agendas relating to specific service issues. There is also the National Health and Safety Committee.

All forums have a regular rhythm of meetings and issues are escalated if required through the structures. Groups produce Alert, Advise and Assure (AAA) reports for effective oversight.

All groups are functioning well and are regularly reviewed in terms of their effectiveness.

Task and Finish Groups and Project Groups

TU partners are involved with all the key projects being undertaken. At the time of writing there are nine key task and finish groups which have TU engagement. Alongside this, there are core projects such as the Clinical Model Transformation which will fundamentally change how parts of the organisation work and other groups such as the

Policy Group where all new and reviewed policies are sent for sign off in which TU engagement is business as usual.

Informal Engagement

Informally, the CEO and Director of People meet with senior TU partners on a monthly basis to check in and pick up on any issues bubbling up and to discuss what's coming next.

TU partners have access to the Executive team and Senior Leadership Team as required and there is frequent engagement to respond to queries, seek opinions and engage on the issues of the day.

Training for Colleagues and TU partners

The foundation of the working relationship has been built on joint learning and development with all TU partners and managers attending 'Walking in each other's shoes' training. This training was developed in house for delivery and covers a range of subjects:

- Where we work well and where we don't – and why
- Conflict types
- The Social Partnership legislation
- An evaluation to baseline where it felt like the relationship was and what were the specific areas of improvement
- Role play exercise – Walking in Each Other's Shoes.

The training has been rolled out across managers and TU partners with the first session being attended by ELT and senior TU partners. The CEO and Director of Culture Change have been present at all the sessions delivered, as have a couple of the senior TU partners. Full time regional officers have also participated in the session. Feedback has been extremely positive.

Post the recent Social Partnership Conference, the intention is to develop some training for first line managers and to capture local TU partners who have not yet had the opportunity to attend some development.

The impact of the training has been significant. A review piece of work was undertaken to re-measure the original audit of the relationship and significant improvements were identified. Key areas included improved trust, understanding each other's perspectives and mutual respect.

There is an ongoing action plan to which activities and improvement projects are added. These range from learning and development to improving TU exposure to new starters and delivering the Social Partnership Conference.

In addition, less senior TU Partners have been invited to observe meetings to expand their experience of governance structures, how meetings operate and to grow their confidence as the next generation of senior TUPs.

The training and learning developed by the WG Social Partnership Team will be uploaded to our Learn 365 platform for any colleague to be able to access.

We are not complacent and there is further work to do in some areas of the organisation with line managers and their understanding of what Social Partnership means and looks like in practice.

The Social Partnership Conference 31st March 2025.

On 31st March 2025, WAST held its inaugural Social Partnership Conference at Cardiff City Stadium. This was not only a landmark for the organisation but was the first of its kind in Wales. The Conference was attended by around 150 colleagues, including both managers and TU partners from across Wales.

The aim of the conference was to emphasise that through mutual respect, open dialogue and a shared commitment to common goals, that it would be possible to create the kind of work environments where both the organisation and its people thrived.

We were fortunate that the Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnership, Jack Sargeant joined us and gave an opening keynote address to the conference. In the afternoon, Shavanah Taj, General Secretary of TUC Cymru addressed the conference, sharing her thoughts and feelings on the value of working in partnership for both the organisation and its workforce. The conference also featured special guest, Derek Walker, Future Generations Commissioner for Wales.

Participants took part in round table exercises, the output of which will be used to further develop partnership working and share best practice. Attendees were also able to attend workshops on sexual safety, avoidable employee harm (compassionate practices), building inclusive cultures through partnership working and a session delivered by the Social Partnership team in Welsh Government on what is social partnership and how to access information and learning.

Engagement with the WG Social Partnership Team

Across the year, WAST was represented at Welsh Government Social Partnership events by managers and TU partners. Colleagues attended the launch event in North Wales and the sessions delivered around the country. Six TU partners with the Deputy Director of People and Assistant Director of Planning and Transformation attended the network session in Cardiff to share experience and learning.

The Social Partnership Team were integral to supporting WAST's Social Partnership Conference.

Ambulance Leadership Forum (ALF) Conference March 2025

At the beginning of March, WAST were invited to deliver a main stage presentation to the Ambulance Leadership Forum Annual Conference. The presentation was delivered by the Director of Culture Change, Deputy Director of People, Head of Culture and OD and two senior TU partners. It was the first time that TUs had presented at ALF. The Trust shared the journey of partnership working over the last few years focusing on the key elements which have resulted in the place WAST finds itself today in terms of much improved relationships. The presentation was well received by the conference.

Next Steps

Feedback from round table discussions at the conference is being collated and is being used to inform the next stages of development across the organisation. We will also consider whether we do a similar event with first line managers from a development perspective and to further embed partnership working across all levels of the organisation.

The team leading social partnership in WAST would also be delighted to further support the WG team and TUC Cymru in developing social partnership across the Welsh Public Sector.

WAST will also be submitting an entry to the Healthcare People Management Association (HMPA) awards in the social partnership category.

We will continue our Social Partnership journey, recognising that there are challenges, and items we will not agree on but can work through together to resolve and come to a mutually agreeable outcome.

We would like to recognise the time, efforts and willingness of TU partners to engage on this work and the journey, as it takes trust and commitment to make it happen.