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



HEALTH & WELLBEING PLAN

2025-2029



OUR BEST

Foreword

Jason Killens

Chief Executive

As we look toward the future of the Welsh Ambulance Service, we remain deeply committed to the health, wellbeing, and overall experience of every individual within our organisation. The vital work that you do, often under intense pressure, can take a toll both physically and mentally. It is our duty to ensure that we cultivate an environment where you feel supported, respected, and empowered to care for yourself while carrying out the essential work of caring for others. Our Health and Wellbeing Plan for 2025-2029 is designed to address this directly, working to create a healthier working culture and a positive day-to-day experience for every single member of #TeamWAST.

Our approach is fully aligned with the Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) Good Practice Guide launched in 2024, supporting Welsh NHS organisations to drive the change needed.

Our plan goes beyond traditional support measures. It reflects our understanding that a healthier workplace is one where mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing are integral to our operations and culture. We aim to make tangible improvements to how we work, how we communicate, and how we support one another, ensuring that personal wellbeing is prioritised as much as the professional services we provide. By enhancing support systems, creating spaces for personal health, and encouraging a culture of wellness, we are confident that this plan will benefit every employee and volunteer, helping #TeamWAST thrive in a demanding yet rewarding environment. Together, we will build a future that supports both personal health and the overall wellbeing of our organisation, ensuring that we can continue to serve and support the people of Wales.



Message from **Ceri Jackson**

Non-Executive Director and Vice Chair

As a board, we are fully committed to embedding the principles of health and wellbeing into the core of the Welsh Ambulance Service culture. We recognise that the success of this organisation to serve the people of Wales relies on the wellbeing of the people who keep it running, and this Health and Wellbeing Plan is a testament to our commitment to you. We will hold ourselves accountable, monitoring the progress of these initiatives closely to ensure that they deliver real, lasting change for every member of staff, every student and every volunteer.

By investing in your health and wellbeing, we are investing in the future of this service. We understand that the pressures of your roles can be immense, and it is our responsibility to ensure that the systems and support are in place to help you manage those pressures. This plan is about creating a sustainable, healthy working environment that enables you to continue delivering the high-quality care that our communities depend on, while also maintaining your own personal health and fulfilment. Your wellbeing is the foundation of our service, and we are committed to protecting and promoting it at every level.

Message from **Angela Lewis**

Director of People and Culture

The health and wellbeing of our people is not just a priority, but a cornerstone of the culture we are building here at Welsh Ambulance. We recognise that, for our team to be at its best, we need to focus on creating an environment that supports both personal and professional wellbeing. The Health and Wellbeing Plan for 2025-2029 reflects our commitment to developing a working culture that prioritises health—whether through access to mental health resources, enhanced work-life balance, or proactive support for physical health. This plan includes everything from mental health support, peer support networks, and comprehensive wellbeing assessments to flexible working arrangements designed to ease the demands of daily life.

Our goal is to ensure that everyone, employee, student and volunteer, no matter their role, feels valued and supported within this organisation. This is about more than addressing the challenges that come with the job—it's about creating a workplace that actively promotes wellness. We want to equip our people with the tools, resources, and structures necessary to thrive in their career without compromising personal health and wellbeing. Together, we can build a culture of care, respect, and resilience that reflects our values and mission.

Vision

Our people face unique challenges serving the people of Wales. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the impact of healthcare work on the health and wellbeing of staff within the National Health Service.

Individual wellbeing support alone is not sufficient, we must place equal focus on the systems, environments and processes in which individuals work.

This plan takes strategic direction from the People and Culture Plan 2023-2026 which sets out our vision for a workplace culture of belonging and inclusion, where our people can be at their best and bring their whole self to work as part of #TeamWAST. Fulfilling and meaningful work bolsters our wellbeing and health.

Our approach to workplace wellbeing recognises the risks associated with the work we do including sleep difficulties, musculoskeletal problems, and workplace injuries. We know that there can be no health without mental health and are committed to improving both the physical and psychological health of our workforce.

We know that ambulance service workers are more at risk of mental ill health, suicide and are more likely to attribute work as a contributing factor to their difficulties. We recognise the risks associated with supporting people in their most distressing moments. The expectations and challenges our people face have increased alongside pressures on health and social care.

We recognise the significant impact of system pressures. From long waits at A&E to attending more unwell patients who may have been unable to access earlier treatment.

This plan builds on the key drivers from our People and Culture Plan Three C's: ensuring we have the culture, capacity, and capability to address the challenges we face as an organisation.

Our Health and Wellbeing Plan is underpinned by these **five key pillars**:



Mental health and **psychological** wellbeing



Physical health and wellbeing



Financial wellbeing



Social wellbeing



Environmental wellbeing

Fulfilling and meaningful work

Promoting autonomy and empowering our people to apply all their knowledge and skills at work, whatever their role, is essential. We must inspire a culture of inclusivity, fairness and psychological safety to ensure our people can be their best.

AUTONOMY

The need to have **control** over one's work life, and to be able to act consistently with one's **values**

BELONGING

The need to be **connected** to, cared for, and caring of colleagues, and to feel valued, **respected** and supported

CONTRIBUTION

The need to experience **effectiveness** in work and deliver valued **outcomes**

The Kings Fund 2022

Quality relationships with our colleagues, managers and the leadership of the organisation set the tone for how we feel about our work. Experiencing a sense of belonging, being valued and respected are the foundations for thriving at work. Our people frequently work independently, or in small teams, which can present challenges for feeling connected and cared for. Every colleague contact is an opportunity to connect and nurture relationships, setting the culture climate at WAST.

The pressures on the system in which we operate can lead our people to feel they are not able to always maintain a high quality service. We all need to experience effectiveness in our work to maintain our motivation, we need to address the barriers to feeling we are making a vital contribution to the service.



Our aim is to be as proactive and preventative as possible, recognising and providing support across a range of issues that can impact all of us, while also providing specific interventions and support for individuals as needed.

Common factors necessary for wellbeing and engagement at work include flexible and reliable shift patterns, meeting physical needs in accessing a choice of healthy foods, regular breaks and finishing shifts on time to support rest, work/life balance and caring responsibilities. We recognise the impact when these basic needs are not met, particularly for those with protected characteristics.

Increasing understanding of the impact of life events on our population is key too; pregnancy, menopause, chronic conditions, aging, and loss will all shape our working lives.

We recognise that the design of job plans, systems and processes have a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of our people. Transformation of our services to increase efficiency and quality is strengthened by ensuring that change holds health and wellbeing at its core. Furthermore, physical and digital infrastructure sends a signal to our people about their value and is an opportunity to further our commitment to their welfare.

We also need to understand and respond to the nuances and challenges of our work, and support individuals, and their managers where possible, in developing bespoke wellbeing support and structures that may include a range of components from our occupational health and wellbeing teams as well as external providers.



Clear and open communication within and between our teams is essential for our people to feel supported and informed about the challenges and triumphs across WAST. Facilitating multiple two way communication channels to ensure all our people can feel heard and our senior leaders are confident they are reaching everyone with key information is vital.

Our People and Culture teams understand that creating an inclusive, accepting and safe culture can mitigate the need for more formal mediation and psychological intervention. A culture of respect and professionalism should be the foundation of our working relationships to create a psychologically and relationally safe working environment. Our WAST behaviours represent and provide direction for our relationships with each other.



As a core and universal requirement for our wellbeing, we are committed to continuing to improve the safety of our working environments. Workplace safety is bolstered by consistent communication via our digital systems, collaboration with our emergency services partners and robust processes where risks are identified.

Our health and safety, wellbeing and occupational health teams support and collaborate with our people to ensure risks are mitigated and that we learn from adverse incidents. If our people come to harm then we are committed to supporting them throughout their journey of recovery, psychological and physical, including welfare support through legal processes.

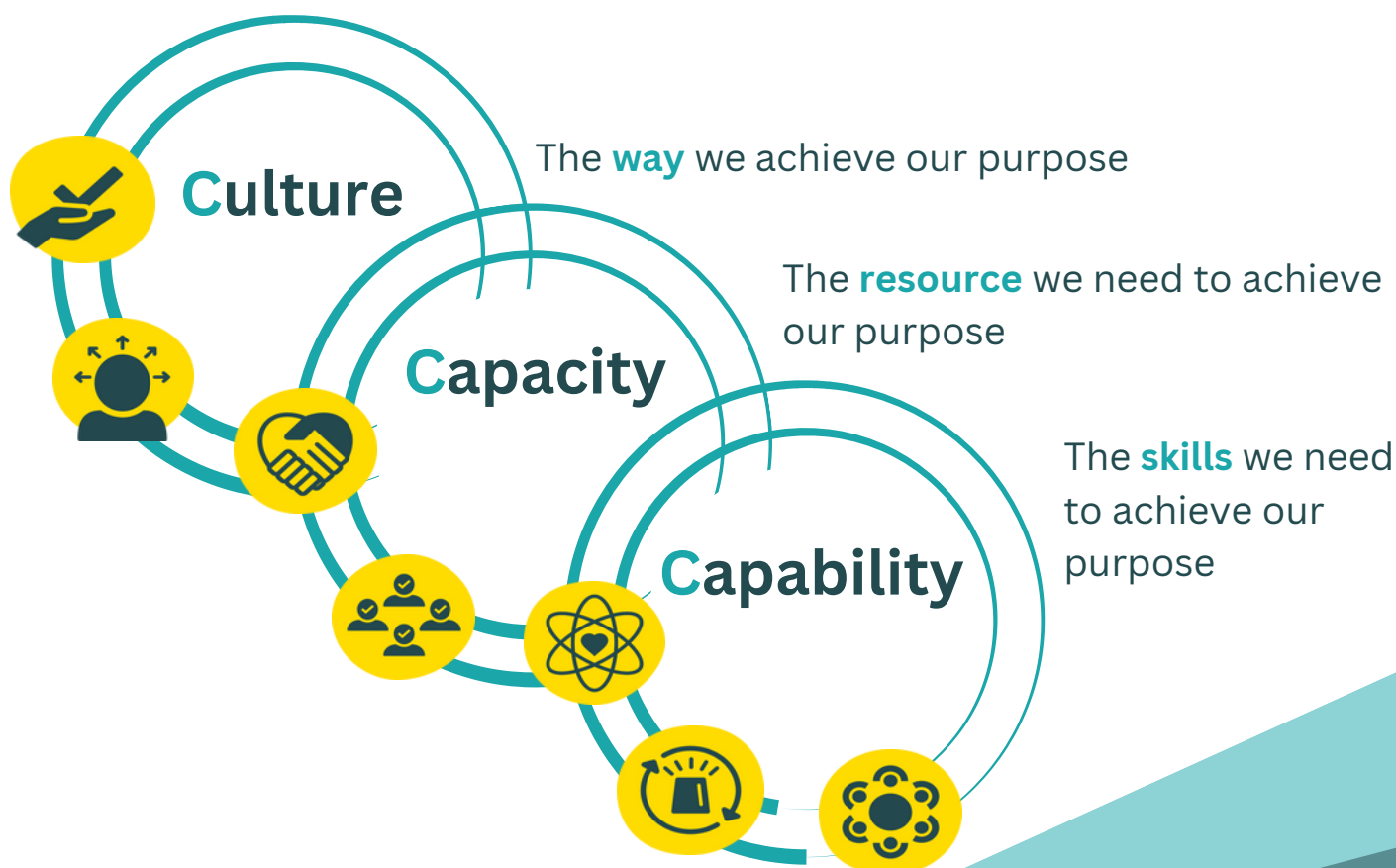
Our people must have the confidence that WAST recognises, values and supports their work no matter the challenges.

Harassment, discrimination, and bullying remain a cultural challenge across the Ambulance sector. This is compounded by the presence of hierarchical and authoritarian leadership, where staff feel fearful about speaking up. We must foster an inclusive, compassionate, and connected culture. It has been recognised that the challenges of our working environment and pressures on our services can amplify a blame culture, where raising concerns or getting things wrong can be threatening. This undermines the innovation we need our people to lead in order adapt to a demanding sector.

Our work in collaboration with the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) and WAST Voices Network established our Sexual Safety Guiding Principles. We also demonstrated our commitment to addressing violence and aggression from the public in our With Us or Against Us public campaign. The right to feel safe from sexual harm, fear, discomfort or intimidation is absolute. We are committed to swift and robust action where concerns are raised. We recognise that sexual harassment or assault sit on the same continuum as lower-level behaviour such as banter. We must see cultural change as part of our approach to creating a safer workplace.

The 3 Cs

This plan supports the ABC of core needs in work through the three broad areas of **Culture**, **Capacity** and **Capability**.



Our Strategic Objectives

Our approach is defined by five strategic objectives that continue to shape our health and wellbeing offer, enabling us to plan our work and hold ourselves to account.

Objective One: Assess and understand the health and wellbeing of our workforce

We recognise that we can only improve the health and wellbeing of our workforce if we continue to identify the challenges our people face. We know health is not static. Our people operate in a dynamic work environment – we must balance addressing well-established trends with being responsive to new developments.

The health and wellbeing of our people is everyone's business and is a shared responsibility between us, our colleagues, managers, and senior leadership. We recognise the importance of the voice of our people in driving improvement.

We will continue to use a range of tools to collect, analyse and report on the key drivers and modifiers of wellbeing at work to inform improvement. We will continue the use of culture assessment tools in working to create the psychological safety we need to deliver quality services in a modern NHS.

We must take a considered and deliberate approach to planning health and wellbeing interventions, guided by those delivering our services and the available evidence-base.

We know that the culture change mapped out in our People and Culture Plan requires a commitment to be curious, open to feedback and willing to take risks to innovate. We must continue to give a voice to people throughout the organisation. Our Speaking Up Safely work continues to provide a supportive and confidential route where anyone who may be concerned about speaking out is heard.



Objective Two: *Proactively promote protective health and wellbeing offers at all levels within WAST for our people and their families and ensure they are available to all*

We know that our dynamic and fast-paced working environment presents a challenge to ensuring our people have access to the right support, advice and guidance. We will use a broad range of communication strategies, being mindful that access to digital resources can be limited for certain groups, for example our volunteers and students.

We will provide the resources our people need to improve their workplace wellbeing, from managing menopause to mental health. We will engage our staff networks and platforms to ensure that we pre-emptively answer the key challenges our people face in their individual health and wellbeing.

We will have a renewed focus on enabling our managers and senior staff to be skilled and compassionate leaders. Our managers and leadership play a key role in setting the tone for the workplace - creating the open and inclusive culture we need. Ensuring our managers are able to be their best is a core preventative wellbeing strategy.

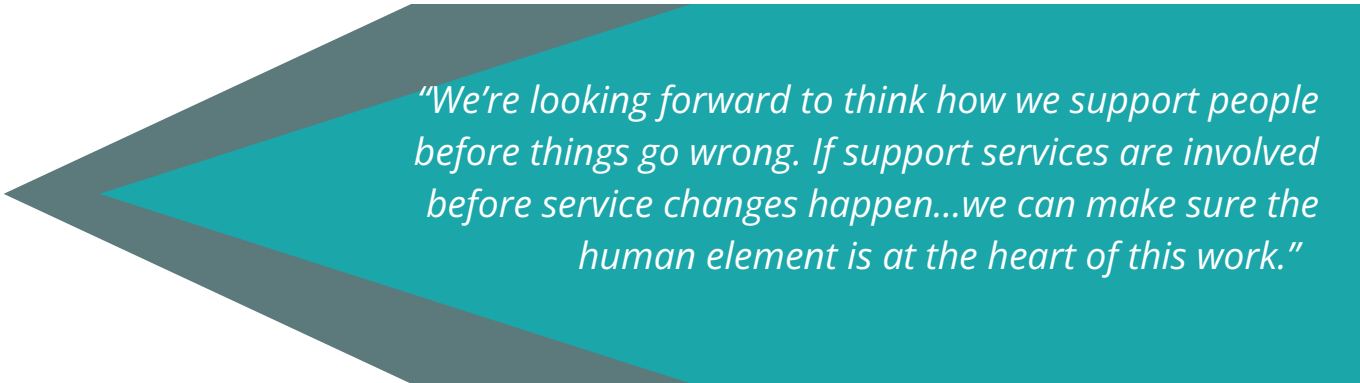
Our People, Health and Wellbeing services continue to work toward our people accessing the care they need early, ensuring there is no wrong door when asking for help. We will proactively engage people who have been harmed in the course of their duties, particularly those who have been the victim of physical and sexual violence or abuse. Ensuring our response across the organisation is evidence-based and trauma-informed.



Promoting the Welsh language is at the heart of public services in Wales. We will continue to facilitate working in the medium of Welsh throughout the employment journey, including recruitment. We recognise this will enable us to serve our Welsh speaking communities far better.

Our inspiring volunteers are vital to our work, ensuring that the people of Wales receive the quality of care they deserve. Our volunteers must feel that the organisation resources are fully available to them.

We know that lone and home working is common throughout WAST. We are committed to building and strengthening communities, promoting cohesion and opportunities for peer-support and mentorship.



"We're looking forward to think how we support people before things go wrong. If support services are involved before service changes happen...we can make sure the human element is at the heart of this work."

Objective Three: *Provide comprehensive preventative and reactive health and wellbeing services and training for everyone at each stage of their WAST career path*

We recognise that NHS staff working in emergency and unplanned care need health and wellbeing services designed for their needs. Services must be proactive and preventative, whilst being able to flex to the changing demands of our work environment and accessible to all.

We know that just as the operating environment changes, so too do our people. We take an intersectional and lifespan approach to understanding the needs of our workforce. Holding in mind that the needs of those at the start of their WAST journey are different to those starting their retirement.

Preventative wellbeing interventions reach beyond traditional individualised interventions, touching every aspect of our work. Our Plan has been developed in line with the HEIW Health and Wellbeing Best Practice Guide for Organisations. The guide recognises that wellbeing at work is influenced by the building blocks of our jobs – the systems, processes and procedures that make up our every day experience.

As digital innovation becomes more a part of our lives, so do opportunities to improve our work and wellbeing. We must never lose sight of the unintended consequences of automation, particularly where human contact is reduced.

The core of our preventative and reactive health offers must always take a person-centred focus – ensuring the organisation’s understanding of psychological distress, trauma and burnout, respect that these experiences are idiosyncratic. Whilst recognising that our life experiences inform and enrich our work. We will increase confidence and skill in responding to suicide risk in our managers and leaders and will respond to suicide risk proactively and compassionately, including offering postvention guidance should it be needed.

"I worried I'd burden someone with the trauma we go to, it's helpful to be cared for by a WAST person. We're more protected and its confidential. I knew the Wellbeing Service were bound by WAST behaviours and would treat my problem confidentially. They knew the pressures we're under and they knew that we're stoic people who don't always put ourselves forward for support."

Our relationships with our peers, our manager and the wider organisation sets the tone of our working environments. A culture of respect and professionalism should be the foundation of our working relationships to create a psychologically and relationally safe working environment. We commit to placing staff health and wellbeing at the centre of service design and planning – recognising that the wellbeing of our people leads to the highest quality of care for our patients.

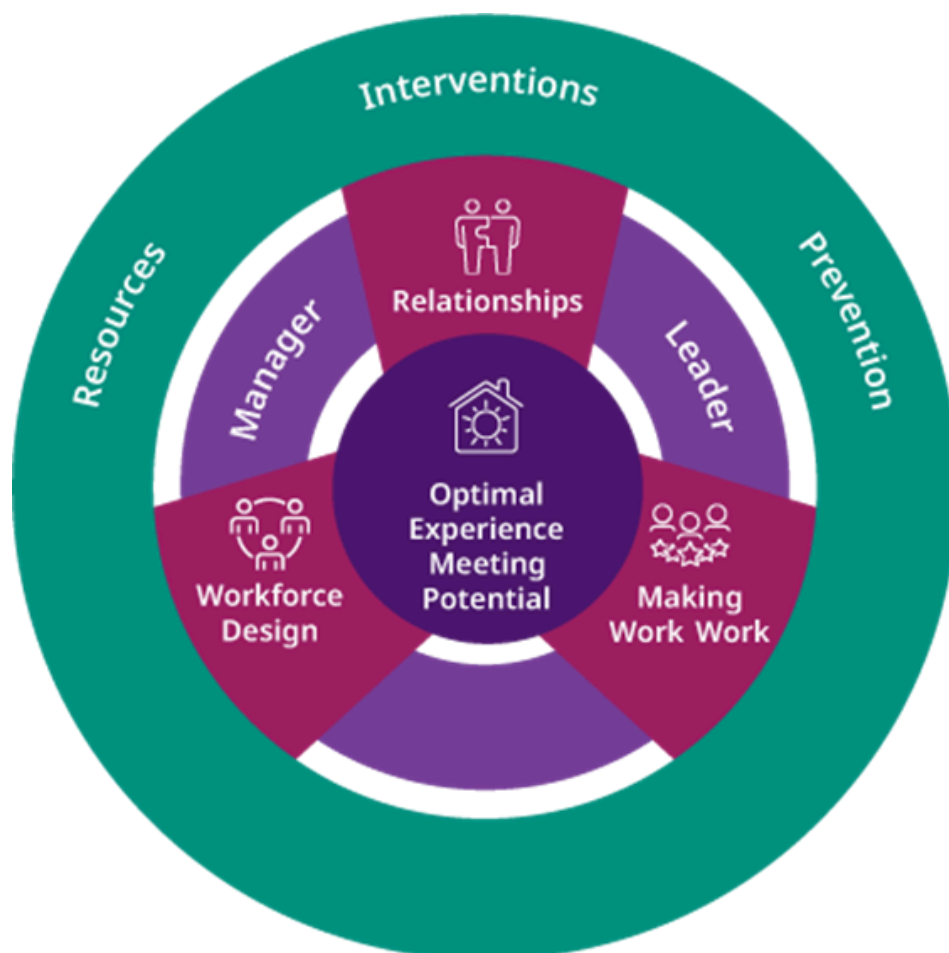


Objective Four: *Succeed in achieving high level Health and Wellbeing standards that are robust and recognised for excellence by external organisations*

We recognise that the system pressures in health and social care highlights further the importance of our commitment and investment to quality, evidence driven, workplace wellbeing support.

We are committed to the highest standards in health, wellbeing and support services across the organisation. Our Occupational Health and Wellbeing department are working towards SEQOHS accreditation as a mark of quality workplace health services.

We work in line with the Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) Best Practice Guide for NHS Wales to ensure quality health and wellbeing interventions of consistent quality across Wales.



HEIW Best Practice Guide for Organisations

We commit to advocating for our people when accessing health services and using our knowledge of NHS systems to navigate the pathway to receiving quality care, such as supporting prompt access secondary care services.

We collaborate with the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE) and work in collaboration with our partners in NHS organisations, charities and government to share good practice and benchmark our workplace wellbeing services.

We will not be driven by the market of wellbeing products, rather we will scrutinise and use professional expertise in selecting, implementing and evaluating wellbeing interventions, recognising the currently limited evidence of effectiveness for individualised workplace wellbeing interventions.

Objective Five: *Strengthen our health and wellbeing partnerships within WAST and the communities we serve*

We go further together. We will continue to build strong relationships throughout the organisation to drive the improvement to health and wellbeing that our people deserve.

As the WAST charity continues to grow, we will endeavour to use this resource to support our health and wellbeing initiatives.

We are committed to the development of our staff networks as drivers of culture change. Our networks cut through hierarchies and service-structures, sharing ideas, experiences and initiatives. Our staff networks are key stakeholders in all wellbeing, inclusion and culture strategies.

Connected, compassionate and cohesive communities are resilient communities.



Our external partnerships throughout the ambulance, health and education sectors provide vital collaboration on meeting the challenges of our work. We will continue to tackle silo working and collaborate across key projects, ensuring complex problems are addressed with the broadest thinking. We will ensure there is no wrong door to services within the organisation.

We will ensure that health and wellbeing initiatives are developed and delivered whilst keeping pace with our broader strategic plans. We will capitalise on the expertise and lived experienced of our entire workforce when planning health and wellbeing initiatives. We commit to invest in our reputation as a driver of innovation and developing the next generation of healthcare practitioners.

Delivering on our Commitments

Our delivery plan sets out an ambitious agenda of health and wellbeing developments which has been shaped by our people. The strategic objectives define the principles of our approach, informed by our WAST behaviours.

Our People and Culture Plan 2023-2026 set out our ambition to create a culture of true inclusivity and respect, where the voice of our people is heard and valued. We will balance system-wide interventions with individual support, reactive support with preventative interventions, and combine evidence based practice and local practice based evidence. We know our people have the insights and local knowledge to make change work.

This is a plan that stretches across the organisation with deliverables shaping the way we work across the service. This framework will allow our vision to adapt and evolve with future challenges.

Thank you to all those who contributed to this plan and to all those who will to continue to influence and shape our health and wellbeing plan throughout the delivery period and beyond.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Our **Rich Picture** - a visual representation of how it will look and feel to work in WAST upon delivery of this Plan, alongside the People and Culture Plan 2023-2026.

Appendix 2: Delivery Plan - this document articulates the actions we need to take to deliver our plan. Our plan is defined by our strategic objectives and key deliverables.



Reaching our people



Building bonds



Managers leading Wellbeing



Supporting our people to perform



Wellbeing conversations



Preventing violence



Health surveillance



Quality support services



Collaboration



Amplify the voice of our people



Achieving accreditation



Developing our people



Investing in our networks

Thank you for reading - Please email wellbeing.support.service@wales.nhs.uk if you have any comments, suggestions and questions

Appendix 2

Objective 1: Assess and understand the health and wellbeing of our workforce

1. **Deliverable:** Develop a WAST Health and Wellbeing Assessment Framework
 - **Description:** Create and implement a robust package of tools to assess and analyse key wellbeing challenges, with specific focus on burnout levels, handover delays and areas where staff feel unsupported. Engage with charity partners to explore funding opportunities that enhance these assessments and allow for more extensive support resources.
 - **Outcome:** Clear data-driven insights that pinpoint specific health and wellbeing risks, leading to tailored interventions that directly address root causes like burnout and mitigate as far as possible the impact of workplace stressors such as handover delays.
2. **Deliverable:** Evidenced Health and Wellbeing Programs
 - **Description:** Implement and measure the impact of initiatives such as sleep support and flexible scheduling to mitigate burnout, system pressures and chronic high workload. Seek resources to expand access to wellbeing programmes, particularly in areas directly impacting staff mental health.
 - **Outcome:** A sustainable suite of effective interventions, validated through before-and-after metrics, that address staff fatigue, mental and physical health and improve overall service consistency.
3. **Deliverable:** Enhanced Learning Capacity in Occupational Health and Wellbeing Services
 - **Description:** Allocate dedicated time for service innovation and improvement, ensuring that staff wellbeing needs—particularly things like trauma exposure, suicide risk, MSK issues—are met with forward-thinking solutions. Our WAST Way leadership development programme incorporates health and wellbeing essential skills, equipping leaders to support staff proactively.
 - **Outcome:** A culture of continuous improvement in workplace health that prioritises wellbeing, reducing burnout and enhancing team resilience.
4. **Deliverable:** Support for Managers in Balancing Service Pressures with Staff Welfare
 - **Description:** Provide consultation and decision-making support for managers to prioritise staff health alongside service needs, with practical guidance on managing high-pressure scenarios, support and guidance with implementing flexible working and reasonable adjustments.
 - **Outcome:** Empowered managers capable of making balanced, wellbeing-focused decisions, reducing risks of burnout from excessive service demands and improving the work experience of all our people.

Objective 2: Proactively promote protective health and wellbeing offers at all levels within WAST for our people and their families and ensure they are available to all

1. Deliverable: Targeted Health and Wellbeing Promotion Programmes

- **Description:** Launch programmes focused on physical and mental health, emphasising prevention of burnout and stress management as core priorities, whilst recognising the impact of work experience, culture and environment on burnout. Introducing themed promotions in line with relevant awareness programmes, such as sleep, men's health, and MSK.
- **Outcome:** Broad access to health resources, resulting in improved health and wellbeing being, especially in high-pressure roles.

2. Deliverable: Supportive Staff Networks

- **Description:** Strengthen support networks like TRiM and Peer Support, promoting a culture of peer assistance in times of stress. Develop partnerships with charities to secure additional resources for maintaining and expanding these support networks.
- **Outcome:** Enhanced staff connectivity and culture of care, helping mitigate the impact of burnout and fostering a more engaged, well-supported resilient workforce.

3. Deliverable: Financial Wellbeing Support

- **Description:** Provide resources and guidance to support financial health, which can alleviate underlying stress that contributes to poor health and wellbeing.
- **Outcome:** Reduced financial stress among staff, contributing to overall wellbeing.

4. Deliverable: Quality Clinical Supervision

- **Description:** Ensure that clinical supervision is consistent and restorative, providing a structured support outlet to discuss clinical and work related issues.
- **Outcome:** Improved staff resilience, wellbeing and expertise, with clinical supervision serving as a proactive measure against burnout, as well as improved performance, safety and service delivery.

Objective 3: Provide comprehensive preventative and reactive health and wellbeing services and training for everyone at each stage of their WAST career path

1. Deliverable: Psychologically Informed Team Support

- **Description:** Provide teams with interventions that help them manage stressors and build strong team relationships, which can buffer against burnout and mental and physical ill health that contributes to our high sickness rates. Ensure all leadership development programs emphasise skills in psychological safety and wellbeing support.
- **Outcome:** Healthier team dynamics and increased resilience, lowering absence rates.

2. Deliverable: 'No Wrong Door' Access to Services

- **Description:** Ensure that any contact with our support services can help staff access the appropriate resources, eliminating barriers to help. Increased understanding of the signposting and advice giving nature of our internal wellbeing service.
- **Outcome:** Staff feel supported at any point of contact, preventing poor health and wellbeing from unmet needs and improving retention.

3. Deliverable: Trauma-Informed Services

- **Description:** Educate staff on the impact of trauma, helping to build awareness and understanding of the impact of trauma, from work and from outside of work both for our people and the people we serve.
- **Outcome:** A psychologically and trauma informed workforce that's more equipped to understand trauma and stress whatever their role.

Objective 4: Succeed in achieving high level Health and Wellbeing standards that are robust and recognised for excellence by external organisations

1. Deliverable: Benchmarking and Sharing Best Practices

- **Description:** Engage in knowledge-sharing networks to ensure we adopt leading wellbeing practices. Incorporate charity funding where possible to pilot innovative best practices in wellbeing support and share successes widely.
- **Outcome:** Continuous improvement of our wellbeing initiatives, with external validation affirming our commitment to staff wellbeing.

2. Deliverable: SEQOHS Accreditation

- **Description:** Obtain this occupational health accreditation to demonstrate our excellence in providing occupational health and wellbeing support.
- **Outcome:** Enhanced credibility and recognition for prioritising high-quality, proactive occupational health and wellbeing services.

3. Deliverable: Ongoing Service Development

- **Description:** Continuously improve our health and wellbeing services to adapt to emerging challenges, ensuring that health and wellbeing risk factors are addressed promptly.
- **Outcome:** Dynamic, responsive services that meet the changing health and wellbeing needs of our staff, supporting exemplar service delivery.

Objective 5: Strengthen our health and wellbeing partnerships within WAST and the communities we serve

1. Deliverable: Facilitate Research and Innovation

- **Description:** As a University NHS Trust, we will establish a culture of research and innovation within health and wellbeing to develop evidence-based practices and support initiatives.
- **Outcome:** Establish WAST as a vibrant hub for NHS research and innovation in health and wellbeing, leading to enhanced resources and programmes that benefit both our workforce and the wider community.

2. Deliverable: Trade Union Partnership and Collaboration

- **Description:** Continue to build constructive partnerships with Trade Union Partners to ensure staff wellbeing is prioritised across all stages of organisational development and change.
- **Outcome:** Stronger alignment with staff interests and needs, with Trade Unions actively supporting the development of a workplace culture that values and promotes health and wellbeing for all employees.



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