

Making every voice count

Our equality plan 2022-2023

Board of Community Health Councils & Community
Health Councils in Wales



Accessible formats

This document is also available in Welsh.

If you would like this publication in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us.

You can download it from our website or ask for a copy by contacting our office.

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About the Board and Community Health Councils

The Board of Community Health Councils (the Board) has produced this plan on behalf of the Board and the Community Health Councils (CHCs) in Wales.

CHCs are independent bodies that reflect the views and represent the interests of people living in Wales in their National Health Service (NHS). CHCs encourage and support people to have a voice in the design, planning and delivery of NHS services.

There are 7 CHCs in Wales. Each one is made up of local volunteer members who live in the communities they serve, supported by a small team of paid staff. Each CHC:



Carries out regular visits to health services to hear from people using the service (and the people providing care) to influence the changes that can make a big difference



Reaches out more widely to people within local communities to provide information, and to gather views and experiences of NHS services. CHCs use what they hear to check how services are performing overall and to make sure the NHS takes action to make things better where this is needed



Gets involved with health service managers when they are thinking about making changes to the way services are delivered so that people and communities have their say from the start



Provides a complaints advocacy service that is free, independent and confidential to help people to raise their concerns about NHS care and treatment.

The Board of CHCs (the Board) exists to support, assist, advise and manage the performance of CHCs. It represents the collective views of CHCs across Wales.

Background

As a people's voice movement, our role is to give a strong and powerful voice in the NHS to people living in Wales, particularly those who often go unheard.

By helping to make sure "every voice is heard", we work to make sure that those who design, develop, plan and deliver NHS services for people living in Wales listen and respond to you. We work hard every day so that everyone has an equal say in their NHS and a fair and equal experience of healthcare services.

The Board of CHCs and the 7 CHCs in Wales are committed to meeting the duties set out in the Equality Act 2010¹. The act protects people's rights in law. It sets out the basic, fundamental elements needed to create a fair and more equal society.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015² helps make sure the NHS thinks about people now and in the future when it makes decisions. It helps make sure it works together with others to make things better where this is needed.

The Socio-Economic Duty has been introduced to help make sure people living in poverty are treated equally and fairly. This duty helps make sure public bodies think carefully about how to reduce poverty and inequality when they make big decisions.

Although the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and the Socio-Economic Duty do not place responsibilities on the Board and CHCs directly, we aim to carry out all our activities with these responsibilities in mind.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

² <https://www.futuregenerations.wales/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/150623-guide-to-the-fg-act-en.pdf>

Events across the world in recent years have shown that ingrained inequalities and discrimination continue to exist in so-called modern nations. The killing of George Floyd in the USA and the abuse hurled at British footballers both demonstrate how race discrimination is with us every day.

We have all been shocked by the murder of Sarah Everard at the hands of a stranger and the ongoing police investigation into what happened to Sabina Nessa. Many more people die each year at the hands of violent people who are known to them, and many 1,000s again suffer violence and control that blights their lives and opportunities.

The homophobic attack and murder of Dr Gary Jenkins in Cardiff reminded us all of the hate faced by many of us who identify as LGBTQ+.

All of us have a responsibility to do everything we can to tackle the injustice we see wherever and whenever we see it.

We know that some people and groups living in Wales have been denied equality for a long time. In 2018, a report 'Is Wales Fairer?' identified 7 challenges to becoming a more equal Wales. It identified the difficulties many groups of people face when they need NHS care.

The coronavirus pandemic that reached Wales early in 2020 changed things for everyone. As a CHC movement, it meant that we needed to do different things and in different ways.

We hadn't faced anything like this before. So we were, and still are continuing to learn as we go along. We are finding out more and more about the different and disproportionate impact the virus has had on people with protected and other characteristics.

The pandemic has shown in a devastating way the health inequalities that already existed in Wales. Alongside the NHS, we need to continue to take action to further develop our understanding of this impact and the actions the NHS needs to take in response.

Through our CHC movement's activities in 2021-2022, we identified equality actions we need to focus on in the year ahead. This includes how we carry out our activities as well as how the NHS designs and delivers healthcare services.

You can find out more about the things that have influenced our approach to equality, diversity and human rights in the Appendix.

This plan sets out our approach and the equality actions we will take in 2022-2023.



A word about language

We know that the language we use makes a difference. We know that people may have different views about the language that is used to refer to people and groups with particular characteristics. We also know that what people think about the language in use changes over time too.

So, we will continue to work with others to help make sure we use language that best reflects the preferences of the diverse people and groups whose views we reflect and whose interests we represent.

Sex and gender

The term 'gender' refers to socially constructed roles of women and men and/or a person's conception of their identity. The term is often used interchangeably with 'sex'.

This, in part, recognises that much of the inequality between women and men is driven by underlying social and power structures rather than by biological sex.

Although the Equality Act protects people from discrimination because of their sex, other UK legislation (such as the regulations requiring employers to publish their gender pay gap) refers to gender.

This can be confusing.

So, we have chosen to keep things as simple as possible by using the term gender throughout - unless we are making a specific reference to the contents of the Act that refer to 'sex'.

Our approach and actions in 2022-2023

The Board of CHCs and CHCs across Wales work together as a single movement. We want to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do. We want to help make sure everyone's human rights are protected through our activities. This includes when we decide what to do, when to do it, and how to do it.

- We are committed to overcoming inequality in the course of our work.
- Our approach to equality is embedded within our plans and ways of working.
- We have set standards for CHCs in Wales, and this includes equality standards.

Within this consistent framework, each of the 7 CHCs are responsible for hearing from and responding to the particular needs of people in their communities.

The equality activities and focus of individual CHCs in any one year may be different - although while we are all still living with COVID-19 many of the things that CHCs are responding to affect people in all parts of Wales.

Our activities locally and nationally will respond to differences in people's experience of healthcare in Wales.

You can find out more about your local CHC's specific equality activities and focus in its Annual Plan.

Embedding a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion in all our activities

Delivering CHC functions

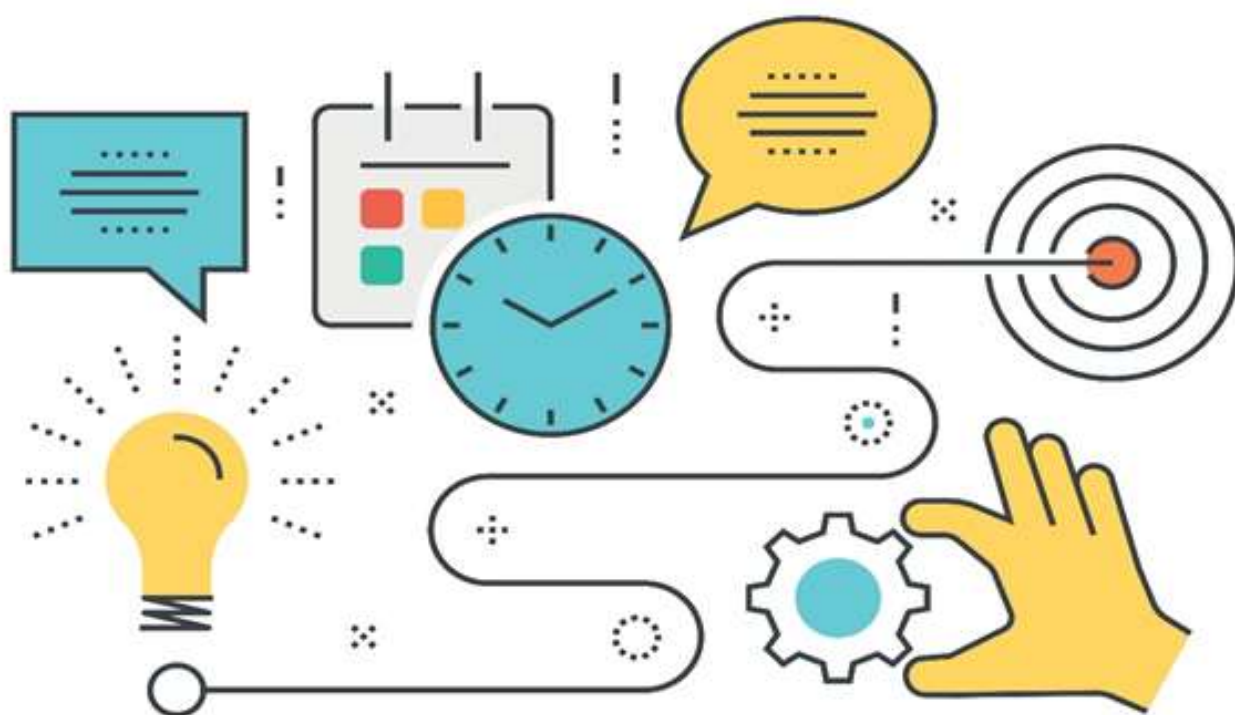
We will work together and with others to hear from people living in Wales and act on what we hear to drive improvement – particularly those who are in the most vulnerable situations and those whose voice might not otherwise be heard. We will do everything we can to prevent and challenge discrimination and inequality across all our activities.

During 2022-2023 we will:

- Continue to work together and with community representatives and groups to hear from people who may be disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 about their experience of the NHS. This will include targeted engagement with children and young people, as well as older people. It will also include people who:
 - are survivors of domestic abuse
 - are living with poor mental health
 - are going through menopause
 - are or have recently been pregnant, including black, asian and minority ethnic women
 - are living in vulnerable situations, including those living alone and those living in deprivation
 - may struggle to travel outside their area for treatment or surgery.

- Work together, and with the NHS and others to:
 - make sure it understands the impact of proposals to develop and change NHS services for people and communities who may be affected by any changes now and in the future; and
 - takes action where needed to adapt or change its proposals to deal with any disproportionate impact on identified groups.

- Work together, and with the NHS and others to check on progress with the things the Welsh Government and the NHS said it would do to respond to the issues and concerns raised last year affecting people with particular characteristics. This includes, for example, action on period dignity
- Work together and with others to signpost people to up to date and accessible advice and information about NHS services. We will check to make sure the information is available in a variety of formats to meet different needs.



Developing our ways of working

We will adapt our approaches and develop our resources and ways of working to extend our reach into communities. We will make sure our services are widely accessible, available and relevant.

We will do things in new ways so that our representation of people's views and experiences reflects the diversity of the communities we serve more widely.

During 2022-2023 we will:

- try out new software to extend our reach by engaging with people in a range of new digital ways, as well as continuing to engage face to face
- monitor how well CHCs are embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in their continuous engagement activities. We will use the results to identify and share good practice across our CHC movement.
- review how well CHCs have developed and embedded their approach to equality impact assessing their proposals and decisions, including those relating to public engagement.
- provide support to CHCs individually and collectively to learn from others and develop their practice in response to what we find.
- further strengthen our arrangements for gathering and responding to equality data and information by:
 - reviewing the data we use from other sources as well as from our own data collection
 - extending our routine use of equality monitoring returns across our functions
 - letting people know about the characteristics of the people and groups we are hearing from in our reports wherever possible

- review how effective CHCs are in using the data and information they collect to focus their plans and target their activities.
- monitor how effectively our CHC movement evaluates the impact of our activities in reaching and amplifying the voice of people and groups who are potentially marginalised
- continue to try out new ways of working so that we can reach more people to provide support and hear their views and experiences of NHS care – in ways that make it as easy as possible for people to do so
- inform and influence the way in which the new Citizens Voice Body is established so that it learns from our CHCs experience and makes sure equality, diversity and human rights matters are at the heart of its decisions on what it does and how it does it.



Supporting our people

Our Board and CHC staff are employed by Powys teaching Health Board (PTHB), which is our 'host organisation'. Our staff are covered by its plans and policies, including those relating to equality.

Our Board and the CHCs are responsible for the successful implementation of PTHBs workforce related policies and plans. This includes taking any targeted action in response to our particular circumstances.

Our volunteer members carry out CHC activities in our communities across all parts of Wales. We want our membership to reflect the diversity of the communities they represent and support.

To achieve this we need to work with the Welsh Government, local authorities and the third sector who are responsible for recruiting or nominating our volunteer members.

During 2022-2023 we will:

- continue to keep our staff and members safe when carrying out our activities while we live with COVID-19. We will do this by working with individuals and teams to identify and agree a work programme and approach that responds to their individual circumstances and needs
- fully support our staff and members in a way that recognises their individual circumstances and needs as we prepare to move from our CHC movement to the new Citizen Voice Body.
- monitor how well our approach to flexible working is helping our staff to balance their work and home/caring commitments effectively as we all continue to live with COVID-19 and in the longer term.
- continue to provide a range of resources, support and advice to managers and staff to help them maintain their wellbeing and the wellbeing of our teams

- carry out regular staff and member surveys so we can understand and measure our performance in supporting our staff and members and take any action needed in response
- continue to monitor the diversity of our CHC staff and membership. We will use the information we gather to inform the plans for the establishment of a new Citizen Voice Body
- use the extended data and information we introduced last year to help us better understand and report on the diversity of our staff and the gender pay gap in our workforce
- continue to focus on improving the diversity of our volunteer membership by making it possible for members to get involved in a more flexible and accessible way
- continue to provide guidance, information and learning support to our staff and members so they understand their responsibilities and the behaviours we expect from everyone
- deliver a programme of learning for staff and members focusing on equality.



Developing our communication

We will communicate clearly, simply and consistently with as many people as we can, across all communities in Wales. We want all our communications to be as accessible as possible.

During 2022-2023 we will:

- take action to respond to the independent review of the accessibility of the Board and 7 CHCs websites in line with the accessibility standards set for public bodies. We will use what we learn to inform the development of the new website for the Citizens Voice Body
- continue to provide learning and support to our staff and members so we:
 - get better at using 'everyday' language in all our communications
 - produce information about our role, plans and activities in a way that is accessible to as many people as possible
- Further develop our use of the Welsh language by:
 - reviewing our policy on using the Welsh language internally so that we continue to build an environment that encourages and supports the use of Welsh wherever possible
 - supporting our virtual Welsh language network where CHC staff and members across Wales can encourage and support each other
 - regularly encourage staff to undertake Welsh language courses
 - recruiting more Welsh language speakers wherever possible by making Welsh an essential requirement in more staff roles
- check whether our actions to make our activities more accessible are providing wider opportunities to communicate in different ways.

Summing up

Throughout the year, we will take time to think about how well our activities are helping to make sure everyone has an equal say in their NHS - so that services are designed, developed and delivered equitably for different groups of people and across the different parts of Wales, and in a way that meets the needs of individuals and communities.

Where we need to, we will make changes during the year, and let you know why.

We will also take time to think about the opportunities and challenges we have faced in delivering our equality actions so that this can inform and influence the design and establishment of the new citizen voice body.



The Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulation 2011

The Equality Act 2010 brings together and replaces the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. This was done so that the law is clear, strong and easy to follow. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010.

The Act contains a public sector equality duty which replaces the previously separate duties on race, disability and gender equality. This came into force on 5 April 2011.

The aim of the equality duty is to make sure public bodies and those carrying out public functions think about how the things they do can help make things fairer for everyone - by making sure equality and good relations are built in to their day-to-day activities.

The duty makes sure public bodies think about equality when they make decisions about how things should be done and when they deliver services. The duty also makes sure these things are checked so that they work well. This is so things are better for everyone.

The 3 aims of the equality duty are to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The general duty covers the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Sex
- Race – including ethnic or national origin, colour or nationality
- Disability
- Gender reassignment

- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief – including lack of belief
- Marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Most public bodies in Wales also have to follow duties set by the Welsh Government. These duties say what public bodies must do to show people they are doing what they need to so that things are fairer for everyone.

The Board of CHCs in Wales is required to meet these specific duties. Although the 7 CHCs are not, we all agreed we want to think about the things it says when we decide on and carry out our activities

You can find out more through these links:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty>

The Human Rights Act 1998

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death. They apply wherever you are from, what you believe or how you choose to live your life.

They can never be taken away, although they can sometimes be restricted – for example if a person breaks the law, or to protect someone from harm. These basic rights are based on shared values like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence.

These values are defined and protected by law. In Wales our human rights are protected by the Human Rights Act 1998.

You can find out more through this link:

[Human Rights Act 1998.](#)

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

In 2015, the Welsh Government made a law to make Wales a better place for people living now and for people in the future.

The law says that public bodies in Wales must think about people now and in the future when they decide things.

It says that to make things better everyone needs to work together.

There are 44 public bodies that must work together to make things better. This includes NHS bodies. Although it doesn't include the Board of CHCs or the 7 CHCs in Wales, we still want to think about the things it says when we decide on and carry out our activities.

You can find out more through this link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>

The Welsh Language Standards (No. 7) Regulations 2018

Since May 2019, the Board of CHCs and CHCs in Wales must meet a set of standards for providing services in the Welsh language. The Board and each CHC has a set of standards that they must meet. These vary in some cases to reflect our differences.

You can find out more through this link:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2018/441/made>

<http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.cymru/English/Organisations/Pages/SearchStandards.aspx>

The Socio-Economic Duty

The Welsh Government brought in a new duty on some public bodies in Wales on 31 March 2021.

It did this because people are often treated unfairly when they are living in poverty.

So, to help make sure people living in poverty are treated equally and fairly, the new duty will make sure public bodies think carefully about how to reduce poverty and inequality when they make big decisions.

The public bodies in Wales that must work together to make things better include local health boards, NHS trusts and special health authorities. Although it doesn't include the Board of CHCs or the 7 CHCs in Wales, we still want to think about the duty when we decide on and carry out our activities.

You can find out more through these links:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/preparing-for-the-commencement-of-the-socio-economic-duty.pdf>

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-07/commencing-socio-economic-duty-factsheet.pdf>

Welsh Government Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

In March 2020 the Welsh Government produced its plan for making sure everyone in Wales is treated equally and fairly, and that their human rights are met.

The plan responds to the main things people in Wales said about what was important to them. This included:

- thinking more about human rights
- more help to make services like transport accessible
- more focus on the level of poverty and how this affects people's equality
- looking at how leaving the European Union might affect human rights

- doing more to make sure different groups of people are represented in public bodies.

You can find out more through this link:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-04/strategic-equality-plan-equality-aims-objectives-actions-2020-2024.pdf>

Is Wales Fairer? The state of equality and human rights 2018

This report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission is about how fair life is for people in Wales. It says that some things have got better for some people in Wales. It says that life is still unfair for many people. This includes people who don't have much money, disabled people, women and some ethnic minority groups.

In health, it says more needs to be done to make things better for some people so that they can:

- get the healthcare they need when they need it
- have better health and live longer
- get help for their mental health.

You can find out more through this link:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/is-britain-fairer-2018-is-wales-fairer.pdf>

“First Minister’s BAME COVID-19 Socioeconomic Subgroup report” & supporting evidence

This report came out in June 2020. It said that “although the coronavirus pandemic has created widespread fears and risks to lives and livelihoods across communities in Wales and around the world, the impacts on black, asian and minority ethnic communities have been especially profound.

Members of black, asian and minority ethnic communities are disproportionately contracting and dying from the Covid-19 disease, with available statistics suggesting that British black, asian and minority ethnic people are up to two times more likely to die from the disease than their white counterparts”.

The Welsh Government also published the information that supported the things the report said.

You can find out more through this link:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/first-ministers-bame-covid-19-advisory-group-report-of-the-socioeconomic-subgroup.pdf>

Into sharp relief: inequality and the pandemic

This report by Senedd Cymru (Welsh Parliament)’s Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee came out in August 2020. The Senedd held a debate on it in October 2020.

The report said that “during the coronavirus pandemic, people’s chances of dying, losing jobs or falling behind in education have in part been determined by our age, race, gender, disability, income and where we live. The virus and the response to it is widening existing inequalities, by reducing the incomes and increasing risks disproportionately for some groups of people”.

You can find out more through this link:

<https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld13403/cr-ld13403-e.pdf>

Race Equality Action Plan

In March 2021 the Welsh Government asked people to tell it what they thought of its plan to make Wales Anti-Racist by 2030. The draft plan aims to change the lives of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in Wales. It responds to the things that have led to the coronavirus

pandemic having a bigger impact on people from ethnic minority communities.

It sets out a vision that means together we are against racism, we do not let it happen, and take steps to make sure that people from ethnic minority groups are treated fairly and with respect. The consultation on the plan ended in July 2021. The Welsh Government is thinking about the responses before deciding on what happens next.

You can find out more through this link:

[Race Equality Action Plan: An Anti-racist Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

Locked Out: Liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond Covid-19

In July 2021 the Welsh Government said what it planned to do to respond to the things affecting disabled people that had been shared in a report by the Disability Equality Forum Steering Group.

One of the things the report covers is health and wellbeing. You can find out more through this link:

[Locked out: liberating disabled people's lives and rights in Wales beyond COVID-19: the Welsh Government's response | GOV.WALES](#)

"LGBTQ+ action plan"

In October 2021 the Welsh Government's consultation on its LGBTQ+ Action Plan ended. It is thinking about the consultation responses before setting out what will happen next. You can find out more through this link:

[LGBTQ+ Action Plan | GOV.WALES](#)

We want to hear your views

We want to hear from you at any time about our approach to equality, diversity and human rights.

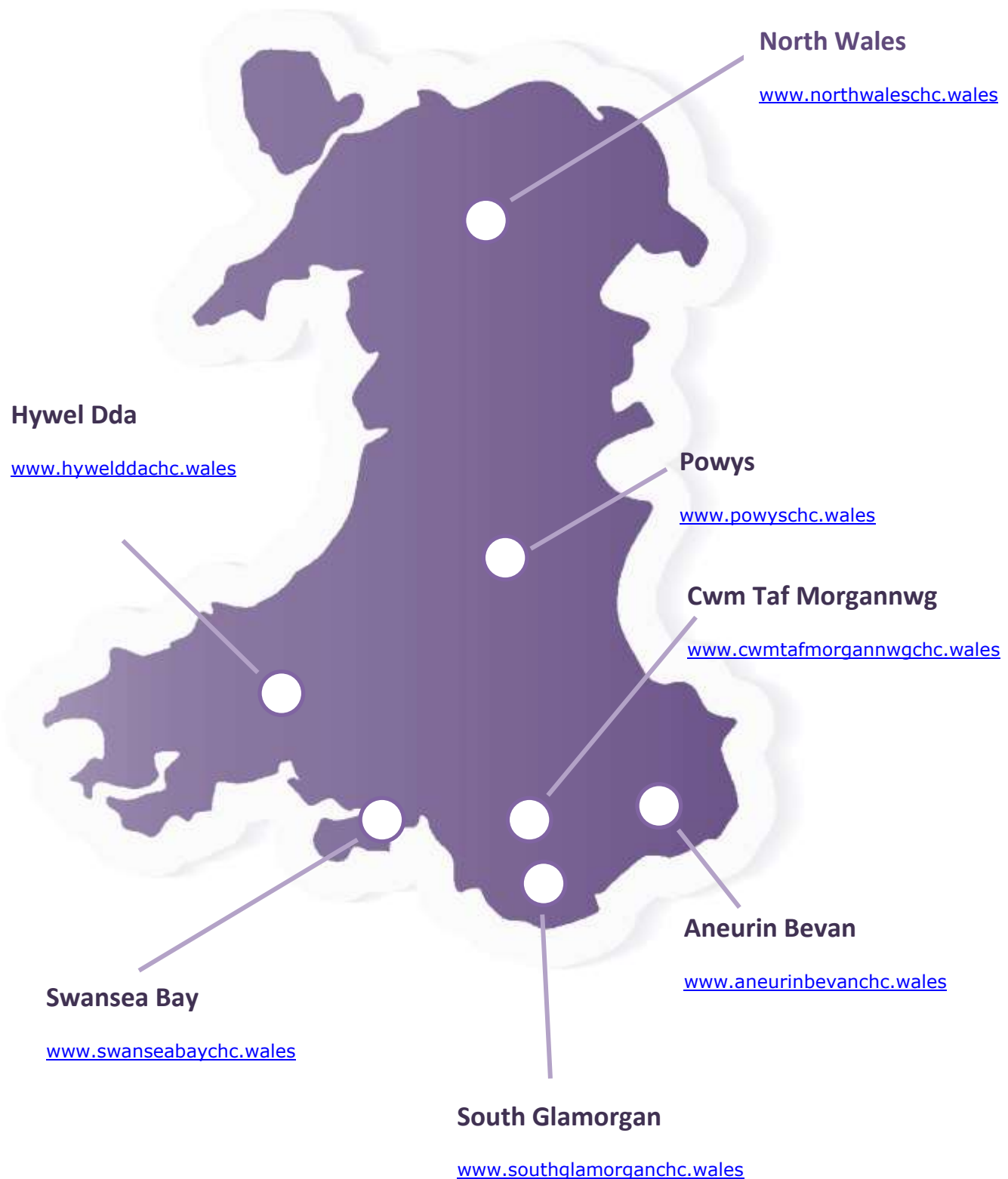
We want to know any ideas you have about what else we might need to do or how we might need to do things differently.

When we hear from you we will review our plans and make changes where we need to.

You can get in touch with us in the way that best meets your needs, including in Welsh. Please see the 'contact us' page.



Find out more about your CHC



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[@CHC_Wales](https://twitter.com/CHC_Wales)



www.facebook.com/BCHCW1/

We welcome telephone calls in Welsh.

If you write to us in Welsh, we will answer in Welsh. This will not lead to a delay in responding to your correspondence.

www.boardchc.wales