
WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Update on Digital Health and Care**

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BY **Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services**

A Healthier Wales recognised digital as a key enabler of transformational change, whilst also acknowledging the challenges of driving digital change at pace and scale across health and care in Wales.

These challenges were also highlighted by the work of the Parliamentary Review of Health and Care, and recommendations made by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). In response, I commissioned two major independent reviews of digital in health and care.

The Digital Governance Review addressed the current state of our organisational and decision-making structures, taking account of reports and recommendations by the Parliamentary Review, WAO and PAC. It set out wide ranging recommendations including the establishment of a new Chief Digital Officer (CDO) for Health and Care, a stronger emphasis on common technical standards, new governance and decision-making structures, and a shared services approach to core digital services.

The Digital Architecture Review addressed the current state of our national digital systems, and assessed them against the ambitions for change set out in *A Healthier Wales*. It described how systems should be strengthened and defined more clearly and consistently as an 'open platform' built on common standards, and recommended targeted improvement options.

Both reviews were developed through extensive engagement with key stakeholders across the system, and my officials have sought the views of senior clinicians and leadership on the recommendations from each review. This work has informed my decisions on key next steps for digital health and care in Wales, which are summarised in this statement.

A new Chief Digital Officer role will be established within the NHS National Executive function, with a clearly defined 'whole system' remit. Supported by an advisory structure and a small team, the CDO for Health and Care will define national standards and services, as part of moving to an open digital architecture, across all digital systems. The CDO will

also advise on future digital strategy, act as a professional lead for the digital workforce, and be a champion for digital health and care in Wales. The CDO will work closely with key stakeholders and delivery organisations across Wales and the UK, including particularly other CDOs within the wider Welsh public service.

The NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS) will transition from its current structure, as part of Velindre Trust, to a new Special Health Authority. Establishing our national digital services organisation as a dedicated organisation reflects the importance of digital technology as a key enabler of change, as set out in *A Healthier Wales*. This change will strengthen governance and accountability, both in terms of relationships with other NHS Wales organisations and through stronger leadership and oversight, through an independent chair and board members, with experience and understanding of digital change.

A Healthier Wales also included a commitment to significantly increase investment in digital priorities, alongside improved leadership and delivery. I have previously announced the amount of additional funding for digital of £50 million, as part of the £192 million included in the budget to support delivery of *A Healthier Wales*. This additional funding will be managed centrally by Welsh Government to support a portfolio of transformational programmes, covering five strategic themes:

- **Transforming digital services for patients and public**
- **Transforming digital services for professionals**
- **Investing in data and intelligent information**
- **Modernising devices and moving to cloud services**
- **Cyber-security and resilience**

This is a step change in digital investment. It will accelerate the delivery of key programmes, including the Wales Community Care Information System and a National Data Resource, both of which are included as commitments in *A Healthier Wales*. It will support the wider implementation of recommendations from the two reviews, including the creation of a CDO and SHA, and further actions which will strengthen digital delivery and planning across the system. These include establishing a new Digital Business Case Delivery Unit, and commissioning four further reviews, which will lead next year to a digital infrastructure plan, a digital workforce plan, a digital commercial strategy, and a digital communications strategy.

This is a challenging programme of work, particularly in the context of Brexit preparedness and other health and care pressures. It is nevertheless a priority for me because digital innovation has the potential to improve health and wellbeing in Wales, to make our health and care services more efficient and effective, and to strengthen the Welsh economy. A dedicated Digital Transformation Programme will support delivery, but the pace of change will depend on the readiness of all stakeholders and partners to adopt common approaches and to work together. I expect to see strong collaborative leadership at all levels, alongside the step change in investment and the revised delivery arrangements I am announcing today. I will continue to keep Assembly Members informed on progress.