

EITEM AGENDA / AGENDA ITEM: 6

Cyd-bwyllgor Canolbarth Cymru ar gyfer Iechyd a Gofal / Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care			
Dyddiad y Cyfarfod: Date of Meeting:	1 September 2026		
Teitl yr Adroddiad: Title of Report:	Mid Wales Joint Committee Strategic Review and Emerging Preferred Direction		
Arweinydd: Lead:	Professor Phil Kloer, Chief Executive, Hywel Dda University Health Board <u>and</u> Lead Chief Executive, Mid Wales Joint Committee and Keith Jones, Director of Operational Planning and Performance for Hywel Dda University Health Board <u>and</u> Programme Director for the Mid Wales Joint Committee		
Pwrpas yr adroddiad: Purpose of the Report:	To receive the findings of the Strategic Review of the Mid Wales Joint Committee, consider the options for regional collaboration, and endorse the emerging preferred direction for future Mid Wales partnership arrangements.	Ar gyfer cytundeb For Agreement	✓
		Ar gyfer trafodaeth For Discussion	
		Ar gyfer gwybodaeth For Information	

1. Executive Summary

The Mid Wales Joint Committee for Health and Care (MWJC) was established to support delivery of the recommendations arising from the Mid Wales Healthcare Study (2014) and to provide a mechanism for collaboration between health and care organisations serving Mid Wales. Since its establishment, the Committee has played an important role in strengthening relationships between partner organisations, supporting the sustainability of services and maintaining a collective focus on the needs of rural communities.

Over the intervening period, the strategic environment has changed significantly. New regional partnership arrangements have developed, workforce and financial pressures have intensified, and advances in digital technology have transformed service delivery models. These changes prompted a review of the continuing role, purpose and value of the MWJC. The review concludes that while many of the original ambitions of the Mid Wales Healthcare Study have been realised, there remains a strong case for continued collaboration across Mid Wales. However, stakeholders identified a need for greater clarity regarding purpose, reduced duplication with existing structures and a stronger focus on areas where collective action can demonstrably add value.

The review identified strongest support for a refreshed partnership model focused on rural health and wellbeing, strategic leadership, workforce sustainability, innovation and advocacy. This approach would build upon the strengths of the current arrangements whilst responding to the substantially changed health and care landscape.

Stakeholders also highlighted the need for greater clarity regarding the relationship between any future Mid Wales arrangements and existing Regional Partnership Boards (RPBs), particularly given the significant role that RPBs play in supporting health, social care and wellbeing agendas across the region.

2. Background

2.1 Mid Wales Healthcare Study

The Mid Wales Healthcare Study was commissioned by the Welsh Government and published in 2014 in response to concerns regarding the long-term sustainability of health and care services across Mid Wales. The Study identified a number of challenges associated with delivering services across a large and predominantly rural geography, including:

- Workforce recruitment and retention challenges.
- Access to services and travel times.
- An ageing population.
- Increasing demand for health and social care services.
- The fragility of services supporting dispersed populations.

The Study concluded that many of these challenges would require greater collaboration between organisations and recommended enhanced joint planning, integration and partnership working.

2.2 Establishment of the MWJC

In response, the Mid Wales Healthcare Collaborative was established in 2015 before transitioning to the MWJC in 2018. The MWJC provided a formal structure for collaborative planning and delivery across Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDdUHB), Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB), Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust (WAST) and Local Authority partners, namely, Ceredigion County Council, Powys County Council and Gwynedd Council.

2.3 Current Context

Since 2018, the environment within which health and care organisations operate has changed significantly. Key developments include:

- Establishment and maturation of RPBs and Regional Joint Committees (RJC).
- Increased workforce pressures.
- Significant financial constraints.
- Growth in digital and virtual care models.
- Lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These changes prompted consideration of whether the current MWJC model remains fit for purpose and continues to deliver sufficient added value.

3. Strategic Review

3.1 Purpose

Twelve years after publication of the Mid Wales Healthcare Study and eight years after establishment of the MWJC, it was recognised that a review of the Committee's role, purpose and contribution was required. Whilst many of the original challenges identified within the Study remain relevant, the structures, relationships and mechanisms through which organisations collaborate have changed significantly.

Consequently, several important questions emerged:

- Does the MWJC continue to fulfil a distinct and necessary role within the current health and care landscape?
- Are the original aims and objectives of the Mid Wales Healthcare Study still relevant?
- How does the MWJC complement and add value to other regional partnership arrangements?
- Does the Joint Committee deliver sufficient benefit to justify the organisational capacity required to support it?
- What form of collaboration is now required to meet the current and future needs of the Mid Wales population?

At the same time, a number of related pieces of work were progressing, including:

- A review and refresh of the Mid Wales Strategic Intent.
- A review of the future governance arrangements for the MWJC.
- Development of the Mid Wales priorities and work programme for 2026/27.

The Strategic review was commissioned by the Chief Executives of HDdUHB, PTHB and BCUHB in order to:

- Assess the continuing relevance of the Mid Wales Healthcare Study.
- Evaluate the contribution of the MWJC.
- Identify areas where collaboration continues to add value.
- Inform future partnership and governance arrangements.

3.2 Methodology

A strategic review workshop was held on 20 April 2026 involving senior leaders from Health Boards and Local Authorities serving Mid Wales. The workshop considered achievements, ongoing challenges, lessons learned and future collaborative opportunities.

4. Key Findings

4.1 What Has Been Achieved

The review recognised significant progress has been made since the publication of the Mid Wales Healthcare Study. Key achievements include:

a) Strategic Collaboration

- Stronger relationships between partner organisations.
- Improved joint planning arrangements.
- Greater alignment across organisational boundaries.

b) Service Sustainability

- Increased strategic focus on Bronglais General Hospital.
- Development of stronger clinical networks.

- Enhanced regional coordination.

c) Community and Digital Transformation

- Expansion of outreach services.
- Increased delivery of care closer to home.
- Growth in telehealth and virtual care models.

d) Research and Innovation

- Establishment of Rural Health and Care Wales.
- Increased national focus on rural healthcare challenges and opportunities.

4.2 Continuing Challenges

The review concluded that significant challenges remain, namely:

a) Workforce Sustainability

Workforce sustainability was identified as the most significant strategic challenge facing Mid Wales. Participants highlighted recruitment difficulties, retention challenges, workforce fragility and competition for specialist staff.

b) Rural Health Inequalities

Challenges remain in relation to:

- Access to services.
- Travel and transport.
- Digital exclusion.
- Service resilience.
- Rural deprivation and inequality.

c) Partnership Complexity

Participants highlighted concerns regarding:

- Duplication across partnership arrangements.
- Capacity pressures.
- Increasing governance complexity.
- Lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities.

d) Partnership Alignment and Social Care Engagement

Local Authority representatives highlighted concerns regarding:

- Increasing health focus of the current arrangements.
- The extent to which the MWJC continues to add value to the social care agenda.
- Duplication of existing health, social care and wellbeing structures.
- Importance of ensuring future arrangements clearly articulates their relationship with RPBs.

5. Strategic Implications

A consistent theme throughout the review was a lack of clarity regarding the present purpose of the MWJC. Stakeholders identified uncertainty regarding:

- Its unique contribution.
- The outcomes it is expected to deliver.
- Its relationship with other partnership structures.
- How success should be measured.

The review therefore concluded that future arrangements should be designed around:

- Clear strategic purpose.
- Measurable outcomes.
- Demonstrable added value.
- Focused priorities.
- Proportionate governance.

6. Strategic Case for Change

The review found limited support for maintaining the current arrangements unchanged. Whilst stakeholders broadly supported retaining collaborative arrangements across Mid Wales, views varied regarding the future scope of those arrangements. Some stakeholders felt that social care interests may be more appropriately represented through RPBs, while recognising the continuing value of collaborative working on shared Mid Wales challenges. Equally, there was little support for discontinuing Mid Wales collaboration altogether.

Participants considered there remains a clear need for:

- A collective Mid Wales voice.
- Rural health leadership.
- Strategic influence and advocacy.
- Cross-organisational learning and innovation.
- Collaboration around shared strategic priorities which demonstrate clear added value and tangible outcomes.

The strategic opportunity is therefore to move from a broad regional planning mechanism towards a more focused partnership model centred on leadership, influence and rural health improvement.

7. Options and SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis

Following consideration of the discussions and outputs from the Strategic Review, six potential future options have been identified as detailed below.

1. Option 1: Maintain Current Arrangements

Continue with the MWJC and its current arrangements.

2. Option 2: Health-Focused Committee

Continue with the MWJC as a Health-focused Committee.

3. Option 3: Refocused Strategic Partnership

The MWJC strengthens its focus on strategic priorities by revisiting and reprioritising its strategic goals, ensuring they remain relevant and aligned with organisational priorities and the needs of the Mid Wales population.

4. Option 4: Rural Health and Wellbeing Partnership

Focus expanded to a broader approach focused on rural health either across Mid Wales or a wider geography.

5. Option 5: Alignment with RPB structures

The MWJC aligns its work with the RPB strategic goals and work programmes in order to identify the Joint Committee's strategic priorities and work programme.

6. Option 6: Discontinue the MWJC

Cease the existing MWJC arrangements with regional planning for Mid Wales encompassed within broader health and social care plans.

Feedback received following the Strategic Review workshop suggests that Options 3 and 4 should not necessarily be regarded as mutually exclusive. Several stakeholders suggested a blended model which combines a strengthened Mid Wales strategic partnership with a broader focus on rural health and wellbeing may offer the strongest opportunity to maximise impact, influence and sustainability.

Appendix A includes a detailed SWOT analysis of potential future options, a summary of which is set out below.

Summary SWOT Analysis of Potential Future Options		
Option	Overall Assessment	Summary
Option 1: Maintain Current Arrangements	Weak	Provides stability and continuity but offers limited opportunity to address review findings or strengthen regional influence.
Option 2: Health-Focused Committee	Moderate	- Improves focus but risks reducing integration and weakening wider regional collaboration. - Moderately attractive operationally but strategically weaker.
Option 3: Refocused Strategic Partnership	Strong	- Balanced option with significant strengths, manageable risks and relatively low disruption. - Provides a clear opportunity to refresh purpose and priorities.
Option 4: Rural Health and Wellbeing Partnership	Strong	- Significant opportunities and strategic advantages outweigh implementation risks. - Offers a strong strategic fit, creating opportunities for innovation, influence and long-term sustainability whilst retaining a clear Mid Wales identity.
Option 5: Alignment with RPB Structures	Moderate	Delivers governance simplification and integration benefits but risks diluting the distinct Mid Wales strategic influence and visibility.
Option 6: Discontinue MWJC	Weak	Simplifies structures but creates substantial strategic, reputational and stakeholder risks.
Hybrid Option Options 3 and 4: Refocused Strategic Partnership <u>and</u> Rural Health and Wellbeing Partnership	Strongest	- Strongest SWOT profile overall. - Combines the stability and deliverability of Option 3 with the ambition, strategic focus and future opportunities offered by Option 4.

Overall SWOT Conclusion

The SWOT analysis indicates that the development of a hybrid model, combining the strengths of Options 3 and 4 is the strongest option. This would involve establishing a Strategic Rural Health and Wellbeing Partnership built on the existing foundations of the MWJC, enabling continued regional collaboration while strengthening strategic focus, rural leadership and future influence.

The analysis also supports Option 4 as a strong strategic choice, with Option 3 providing a credible lower-risk transition pathway.

8. Emerging Preferred Direction

8.1 Emerging Preferred Options

The review has identified limited support for maintaining Options 1 and 6. Instead, there is a broad consensus around developing a refreshed collaborative model with strongest support for a model combining the strengths of Options 3 and 4. Key characteristics include:

- A clear and measurable purpose.
- Focus on strategic rather than operational issues.
- Strong emphasis on rural health and wellbeing.
- Leadership of areas where collective action creates demonstrable value.
- Reduced bureaucracy.
- Proportionate governance arrangements.
- Stronger advocacy on behalf of rural communities.
- A clearer focus on reducing health inequalities experienced by rural populations.
- Leadership in the development and promotion of evidence-based practice, innovation and service models relevant to rural communities.
- Influencing national and regional policy affecting rural health and wellbeing.

Such an approach would build upon the strengths and relationships developed through the MWJC whilst responding to the substantially changed environment within which organisations now operate.

8.2 Proposed Model

To provide a clear strategic focus for the future model, it is proposed that its purpose, priorities and operating principles are established from the outset. Together, these elements would define the role, areas of focus, and ensure that it operates in a way that is distinct, collaborative and outcome driven. The proposed model, drawing on elements of both Options 3 and 4, would be based on the following:

a) Purpose

To improve outcomes and reduce inequalities experienced by rural communities through strategic leadership, collaboration, innovation, evidence-based practice and influence.

b) Strategic Priorities

- Rural workforce, sustainability and resilience including training, recruitment, retention and professional development.
- Reducing rural health inequalities.
- Digital inclusion and innovation.
- Research, evidence and learning.
- Strategic influence, advocacy and policy development.
- Cross-border service planning and coordination.

c) Design Principles

- Focused on strategic leadership rather than operational delivery.
- Clearly differentiated from and complementary to, existing structures and partnerships with clearly defined relationships with RPBs, RJC's and other strategic partnerships to avoid duplication.

- Collaborative and partnership led.
- Lean and proportionate governance arrangements.
- Reduced bureaucracy and administrative burden.
- Data-informed decision-making.
- Clear, measurable outcomes and demonstrable impact.
- Community engagement and co-production.

9. Risks

The transition to a future operating model presents a number of strategic risks that will require careful management to ensure continuity, stakeholder confidence and the achievement of intended outcomes. The following table outlines the key risks identified at this stage, together with proposed mitigation actions designed to support a smooth transition and provide clarity regarding future arrangements.

Risk	Mitigation
Continued lack of clarity regarding purpose	Agree a clear future mandate and outcomes framework.
Duplication with existing structures	Clearly define scope, governance arrangements and working relationships with RPBs, RJC's and other strategic partnerships to ensure complementary roles and minimise duplication.
Stakeholder disengagement	Implement comprehensive engagement programme.
Loss of Mid Wales identity	Retain clear rural and Mid Wales focus within future arrangements.

10. Proposed Timeline and Next Steps

The proposed timeline and next steps for endorsing the proposed model are as follows:

Phase	Actions
Phase 1: Agreement (July-October 2026)	• Secure organisational and MWJC support. • Engage Welsh Government. • Confirm preferred operating model.
Phase 2: Design (November 2026-March 2027)	• Develop and agree governance and operating framework. • Agree membership. • Develop and agree strategic priorities.
Phase 3: Transition (April-June 2027)	• Establish successor arrangements. • Finalise governance and handover arrangements. • Prepare and publish a Legacy and Closing Report summarising the achievements, impact and lessons learned from the MWJC. • Conclude current MWJC governance arrangements.
Phase 4 – Delivery (July 2027 onwards)	• Implementation of agreed strategic priorities and governance and operating framework.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

For Agreement - The Mid Wales Joint Committee (MWJC) is asked to:

- **Note** the summary findings of the Strategic Review of the MWJC.
- **Note** the six potential options identified for further consideration, the associated SWOT analysis, and the emerging preferred direction for the future role, purpose, and strategic direction of the MWJC.
- **Agree** with the emerging preferred direction to inform further engagement with the Welsh Government.
- **Agree** with the proposed timeline and next steps.

Mid Wales Joint Committee Strategic Review

Summary SWOT Analysis of Potential Future Options

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Mid Wales Joint Committee Strategic Review

Detailed SWOT Analysis of Proposed Future Options

Option	SWOT Element			
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Option 1: Maintain Current Arrangements Analysis	- Established governance arrangements and relationships across Health Boards, Local Authorities and partner organisations. - Recognised Mid Wales forum. - Retains collective voice. - No transition work or costs.	- Lack of clarity of purpose and measurable impact. - Duplication with RPBs/RJCs and other regional partnerships. - Limited relevance to some social care priorities. - Increasing bureaucracy. - Does not respond to findings of Strategic Review workshop.	- Maintain Mid Wales identity. - Strengthen existing priorities and workstreams. - Align priorities - Improve outcome measurement.	- Stakeholder disengagement; - Increasing scrutiny of value and effectiveness. - Reduced Local Authority involvement. - Risk of becoming irrelevant.
Option 2: Health-Focused Committee	- Clear health-focused purpose. - Simpler governance. - Stronger alignment with Health Board priorities. - Reduced burden on Local Authority.	- Less aligned to health and social care integration agenda. - Possible loss of Local Authority participation. - Narrower focus.	- Potential to support shared cross-border NHS workforce, clinical network and service sustainability. - Focus on cross-border health challenges.	- Creation of silos. - Reduced support from Local Authority partners. - Conflict with Welsh Government policy on integration. - Reputational risk.
Option 3: Refocused Strategic Partnership	- Addresses review themes. - Retains Mid Wales identity. - Reduces bureaucracy. - Builds on existing partnerships and achievements. - More straightforward transition than creating a new partnership.	- Requires redesign and cultural change. - Depends on strong leadership. - Risk of being seen as rebranding and insufficient change.	- Create a high-value strategic forum. - Stronger advocacy. - Focus on high-value priorities with measurable outcomes. - Remove duplication.	- Competing organisational pressures and capacity pressures. - Failure to demonstrate outcomes.

Option	SWOT Element			
	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Option 4: Rural Health and Wellbeing Partnership	- Distinctive rural focus. - Aligns with regional working agenda.	- Requires redesign and partner agreement. - Could become too broad. - Risk of diluting Mid Wales focus.	- National rural voice. - Influence national policy. - Attract research, innovation and investment. - Strengthen rural advocacy.	- Overlap with national programmes if remit is unclear. - Insufficient resources could undermine delivery. - Changing policy priorities.
Option 5: Alignment with RPB Structures	- Reduces duplication. - Simplified governance. - Aligns with health and social care integration agenda. - Builds on existing infrastructure.	- Reduced Mid Wales identity. - Weaker strategic voice. - Less focus on Mid Wales and rural issues.	- Improved alignment across regional systems. - Greater integration with wider population health agenda. - Efficient use of resources.	- Rural Mid Wales issues overlooked. - Reduced influence with Welsh Government.
Option 6: Discontinue MWJC	- Removes governance burden. - Eliminates duplication. - Releases capacity.	- Loss of collaborative forum. - No dedicated Mid Wales strategic voice. - Loss of public confidence.	Opportunity for organisations to focus entirely on existing partnerships.	- Loss of influence. - Reduced visibility of Mid Wales and rural priorities. - Reputational risk.
Hybrid Option Options 3 and 4: Refocused Strategic Partnership <u>and</u> Rural Health and Wellbeing Partnership	- Reflects strongest stakeholder feedback. - Retains Mid Wales identity while focusing on rural health and wellbeing. - Supports Welsh Government regional collaboration agenda.	- Requires clear purpose, scope and governance. - Required partner commitment and capacity.	- Become recognised voice for rural health and wellbeing. - Influence national policy. - Supports workforce sustainability, innovation and reducing inequalities.	- Duplication with RPBs if relationships are unclear. - Failure to demonstrate impact.