

# Digital Health and Care Wales: Stakeholder Review 2024



**Atos**



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# Digital Health and Care Wales

## How can DHCW continually develop their approach to collaborative working with its stakeholders?

### Background

Digital Health Care Wales (DHCW) was established as a Special Health Authority in 2021 to provide digital and data services which support the delivery of health and care in Wales. Part of NHS Wales, DHCW currently operates in a complex ecosystem of health and care partners across Wales.

DHCW remains focused on continuing to provide value to its partners and stakeholders. To complement its ongoing internal work, there was a requirement to introduce an independent organisational-level stakeholder review which explores stakeholder perceptions, identifies areas of good practice and continual improvement.

Gaining a detailed understanding of stakeholder views will provide the foundation for improvement through a set of recommendations which will enable DHCW to continually develop their approach to collaborative working with stakeholders.

### Objectives

The review aims to **understand stakeholders experience of engaging with DHCW** to continually improve their approach to working with stakeholders, and forms part of its ongoing commitment and work.

- **Identify stakeholder perspectives:** to specifically focus on:
  - What are stakeholders' perceptions of DHCW?
  - How stakeholders find working and communicating with DHCW?
  - How DHCW could improve how it works with stakeholders in the future?
- **Create a recommendations report to support continual improvement:** this report focuses on the conclusions of the review and emphasises the recommendations and future direction that can be enabled by DHCW and the wider system.

### Methodology

A concurrent mixed methods design was employed with an online survey and stakeholder interviews running in parallel.

- **Online survey**  
Microsoft Forms survey completed by **292** stakeholders
- **Semi-structured interviews**  
Microsoft Teams interviews conducted with **30** stakeholders

Quantitative data has not been weighted and was analysed using descriptive statistics with sample sizes for each item clearly reported. Qualitative and open-ended questions have been analysed using thematic analysis. Further details around methodology are available in Appendix A.

This final, condensed report focuses on the conclusions of the review and places greater emphasis on the recommendations and future direction.

# Context & Approach

## Context for the Stakeholder Review

The health and care sector in Wales continues to face significant challenges, with resource challenges and pressures on the system exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. To enhance partnership working, Wales has historically made distinct choices, adopting a planning approach and establishing integrated Local Health Boards and statutory Regional Partnership Boards.

Several changes have been undertaken in recent years to support the strong national leadership and direction needed to enable the realisation of the full potential of the integrated system. This has seen the formation of the NHS Wales Executive, a hybrid body between Welsh Government and NHS Wales, and the appointment of a Chief Digital Officer for Health and Social Care. However, there is still work to do to ensure the roles and remits of all the different players within health and care are fully understood across the system. To help with this, a review of the national Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) governance is underway.

DHCW and other NHS Wales organisations are operating in a complex shifting ecosystem. Therefore, working in partnership to embed change and drive a whole system approach will be critical to overcoming the challenges that DHCW collectively face.

## Engagement with DHCW

During the design phase, initial themes and topics were developed based on best practices and evidence-based literature. These were refined and agreed upon with DHCW through consultations with the DHCW Stakeholder Working Group and Executive Board. After data collection and analysis, findings were presented to DHCW, and workshops were held to shape and prioritise proposed actions for the challenges highlighted in this review.

# Executive Summary

DHCW is subject to multiple professional, organisational and regional views, and the inevitable reality that it will not always be possible to satisfy all parties involved. It is therefore encouraged that the report is viewed in this context and with consideration of DHCW's position within the broader healthcare ecosystem, acknowledging its multifaceted responsibilities and its level of organisational influence.

This Stakeholder Review reveals that stakeholders' engagement with DHCW varies, with programme collaboration the main reason for engaging with DHCW. Clinical stakeholders were overall less likely to understand DHCW's role. Stakeholders perceive DHCW positively in terms of technical expertise, staff attributes and crisis response. Areas for improvement highlighted by stakeholders were communications, engagement, speed of delivery and clarity on DHCW's role and responsibilities. The ambiguity around responsibilities was referenced beyond just DHCW.

Overall stakeholders felt DHCW had a positive impact. Key areas identified for greater impact include collaboration, and efficiency and delivery. Experiences working with DHCW are varied, with some stakeholders reporting positive interactions while others highlighting challenges, especially around specific factors of communication and collaboration.

As part of the remit of this review, analysis was undertaken to identify themes and areas where actions could be taken to improve how DHCW works with and support stakeholders. Six recommendation themes have been developed, each with tangible actions prioritised by their strategic impact and ease of implementation. Several of these recommended actions tackle system-wide challenges and will require collaborative efforts from multiple parties.



# Who took part:

For this strategic review, a purposive sampling approach was adopted for the survey and a list of interviewees identified to provide representation across the stakeholder groups within scope.

Interviews were conducted to gather strategic insights and to provide a deeper understanding to the issues highlighted in the review.

Data was analysed using descriptive statistics; no statistical hypothesis testing was conducted. Further details around methodology are available in Appendix A.

## 30

### Stakeholders took part in the interviews

Stakeholder Group	n	Primary role	n
NHS Wales	11	Senior Leadership	16
Welsh Government	4	Health & Care Professional	9
Local authorities in Wales	1	Digital, Data and Technology	5
Primary care	4		
Social Care	1		
National bodies and organisations	8		
Academic and research	1		

## 292

### Stakeholders responded to the online survey

Stakeholder Group	n	Primary role	n
NHS Wales	233	Senior Leadership	32
Welsh Government	15	Health & Care Professional	99
Local authorities in Wales	3	Digital, Data and Technology	70
Primary care	7	Management: Non-clinical	75
Social Care	5	Other	16
National bodies and organisations	12		
Commercial partner	4		
Academic and research	5		
Third sector organisation	5		
Patient Representative Group	1		
Individual member of the public	2		

# Structure of the Stakeholder Review

01

## Understanding of DHCW

This section explored respondents' understanding of DHCW's role

02

## Perceptions of DHCW

The section asked about respondents' experience of engaging with DHCW and their view on DHCW as an organisation.

03

## Impact of DHCW

This section explored respondents' thoughts on DHCW's aims and objectives, and overall impact.

04

## Working with DHCW

This sections asked respondents' thoughts on working with DHCW including communication, information sharing and ease of collaboration.

05

## Looking forward

This section asked respondents' thoughts on the future and for recommendations .

*The structure of the survey and interviews align to sections of this report*

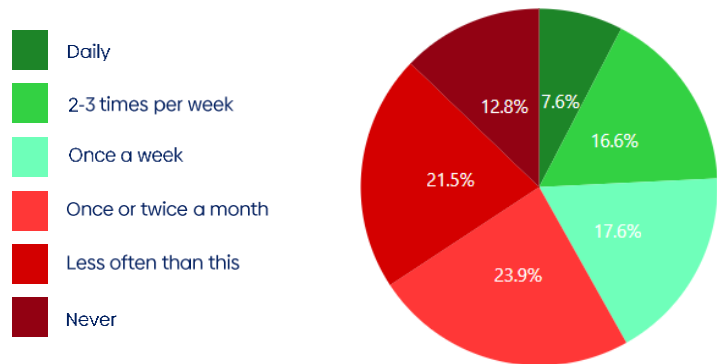
# Understanding of DHCW

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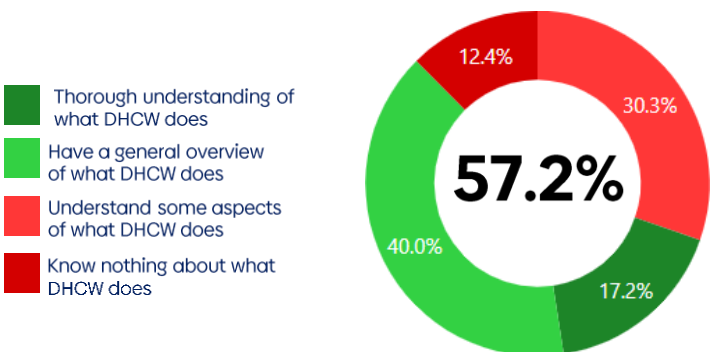


# Nearly half of stakeholders engage with DHCW weekly or more

## But only 17% have a thorough understanding of their role amidst clarity issues



Q4: How often, approximately, would you say that you're in touch with DHCW teams or individuals? (n=289)



Q7: Which of the following statements best describes your understanding of DHCW's role? (n=269)

The survey indicated that 41.8% of stakeholders engage with Digital Health and Care Wales (DHCW) weekly or more, while 58.2% interact monthly or less. The main reason for engaging with DHCW is project collaboration, followed by providing oversight for programmes and service delivery. Stakeholders with less frequent contact showed a broader range of engagement purposes and less focus on programme-related activities.

Over half (57.2%) of stakeholders reported at least having a general overview of what DHCW does, but only 17.2% claimed a thorough understanding of DHCW's role, and 12.4% knew nothing about it. Frequent contact correlates with better knowledge and understanding of DHCW's role, increasing to over 84% for those with weekly interactions. Respondents in a Health & Care Professional role were overall less likely to be familiar with DHCW and understand its role. Stakeholders primarily see DHCW's role as supporting and maintaining digital services, with others seeing its role as development of digital solutions, and central coordination and leadership.

Almost half (49.6%) understand how DHCW fits within the healthcare system, but only 28.9% grasp what DHCW aims to achieve as an organisation. The survey and interviews highlighted confusion about DHCW's role and objectives, often due to unclear differentiation from other entities like Welsh Government and the NHS executive, and internal inconsistencies within DHCW.

"They say things that are contradictory to my understanding of them. When I think I've got it, they say something different."

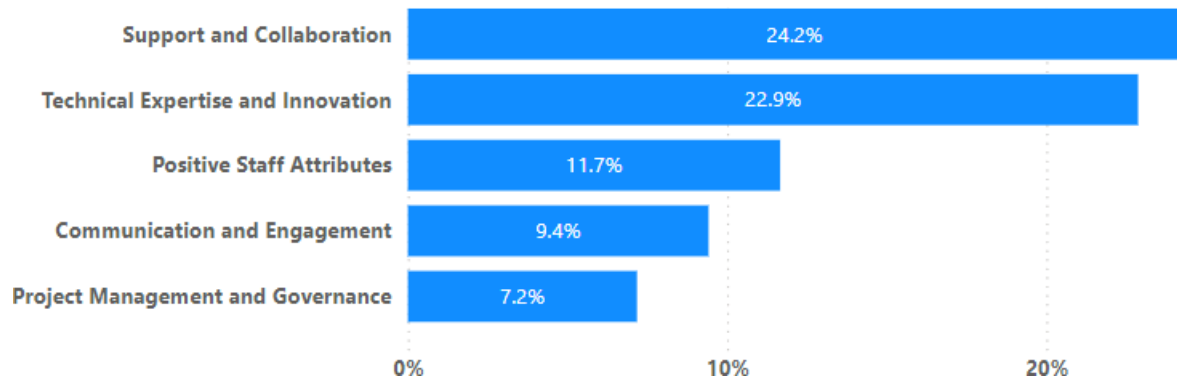
"Every leader has a different take on who they are, and I don't think they have a cohesive vision and clarity on who they are."

# Perceptions of DHCW



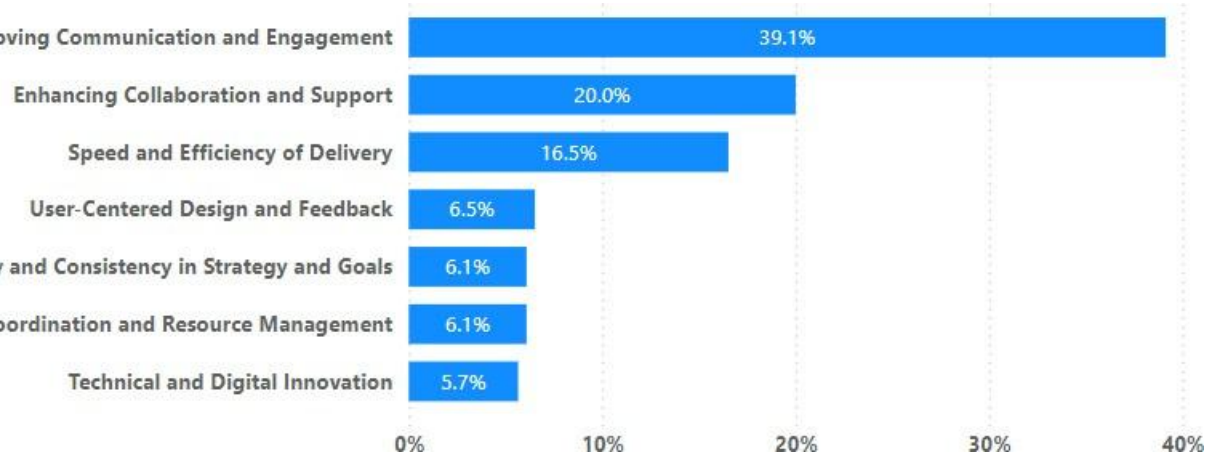
# Support and Technical Expertise reported as strengths

## But many feel that DHCW can do better in several areas



Categories derived from: Q11: What do you think DHCW does well? (n=223)

The free-text responses to the question- “What do you think DHC does well?” revealed that nearly half (48.9%) of stakeholders categorised their feedback under “Support & Collaboration” or “Technical Expertise & Innovation”. However, 24.7% of responses were categorised “Unclear”, often stating 'n/a', 'not sure', or 'no comment'. Positive feedback from interviews highlighted knowledgeable and helpful staff, and strong crisis response capabilities.



Categories derived from Q12: What do you think DHCW could do better? (n=230)

Areas for improvement included better communication and engagement (39.1%), enhancing collaboration and support (20%), and increasing speed and efficiency of delivery (16.5%). Power imbalances and strategic misalignment were noted as barriers to effective collaboration, with frequent contact with DHCW correlating with greater perceived imbalances. From the interviews, stakeholders emphasised a need for more transparent communication, earlier engagement of clinical and Information Governance(IG) staff, and greater joint planning. Mixed perceptions around 'Collaboration' persist, this is possibly due to inconsistency in collaborative practice, or the term being used for different purposes.

Most stakeholders had neutral feelings towards DHCW, with only 13.3% speaking highly of the organisation. Descriptive words used by stakeholders for DHCW included "Slow," "Inconsistent," and "Confused," with "Collaborative" being the most positive descriptor

“I always come away with the impression that DHCW is technically very strong.”

“Sometimes it feels like decisions might be happening within a closed workshop internally within DHCW and presented as a fait accompli afterwards.”

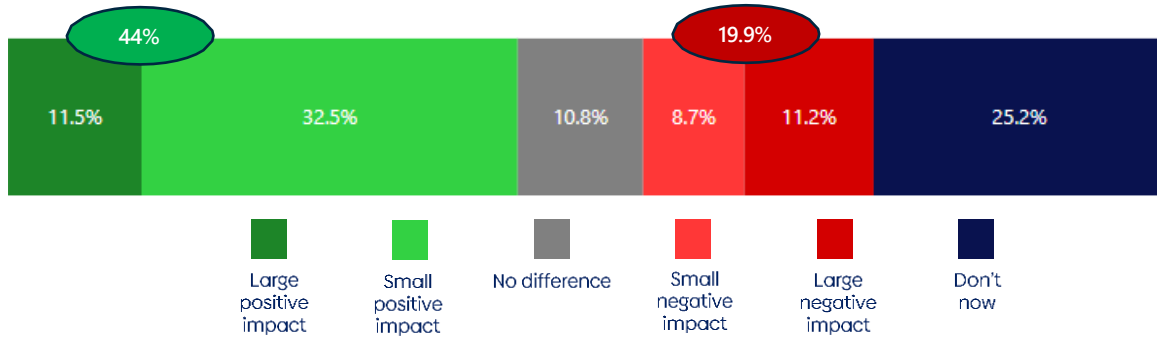
# Impact of DHCW

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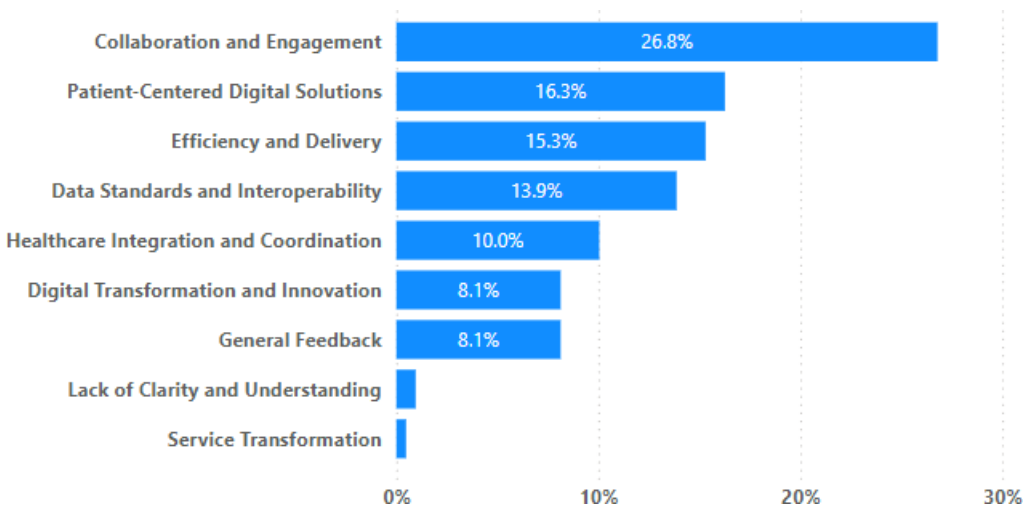


# Overall, stakeholders felt DHCW had a positive impact

## But further impact should be made in Collaboration and Technical areas



Q16: Overall, how would you rate DHCW's impact? (n=286)



Categories derived from Q18 : In which areas would you like to see DHCW having a greater impact? (n=209)

When stakeholders were asked to rate DHCW's impact on providing digital and data services, 44% rated it positively, while 19.9% rated it negatively, and 25.2% were unsure. Familiarity with DHCW influenced these ratings, as respondents who know DHCW well (Question 6) showed an increase in the positive impact rating to 55% , up from 44%.

Stakeholders expressed a desire for greater impact in operational areas including "Collaboration & Engagement" (26.8%), "Efficiency & Delivery" (15.3%) as well as more technical areas like "Patient-Centred Digital Solutions" (16.3%), and "Data Standards & Interoperability" (13.8%).

In terms of DHCW's strategic missions, approximately one-third of respondents reported a positive impact for Missions 1 (40.2%), 2 (32.5%), and 3 (35.2%), but this dropped for Missions 4 (21.5%) and 5 (21.8%). Mission 5 had the highest negative impact rating (34.2%), and Mission 4 had the most "No difference" responses (27.1%).

Clinical staff were more likely to be unsure about the impact of DHCW's missions, with "Don't know" responses increasing by 14.9% on average. This suggests that clinical staff may be less familiar with and, therefore, less able to assess the impact of these high-level mission statements.

"DHCW was instrumental during the COVID vaccination efforts, demonstrating their ability to respond effectively in crisis situations."

"I would want a joint plan with them to understand our interface and how that works. What are we working on together, and what are we working on separately?"

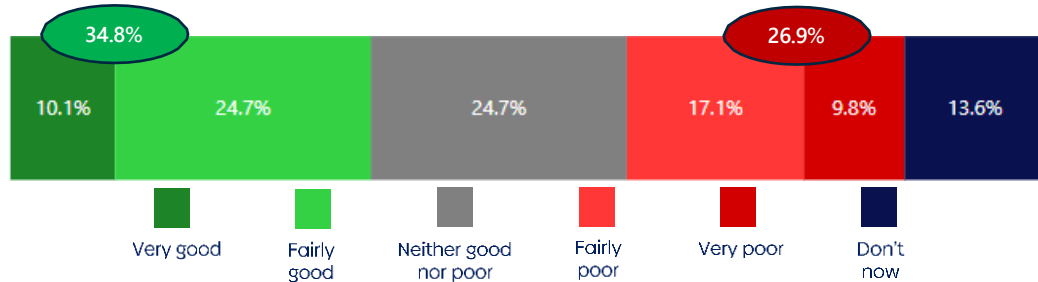
# Working with DHCW

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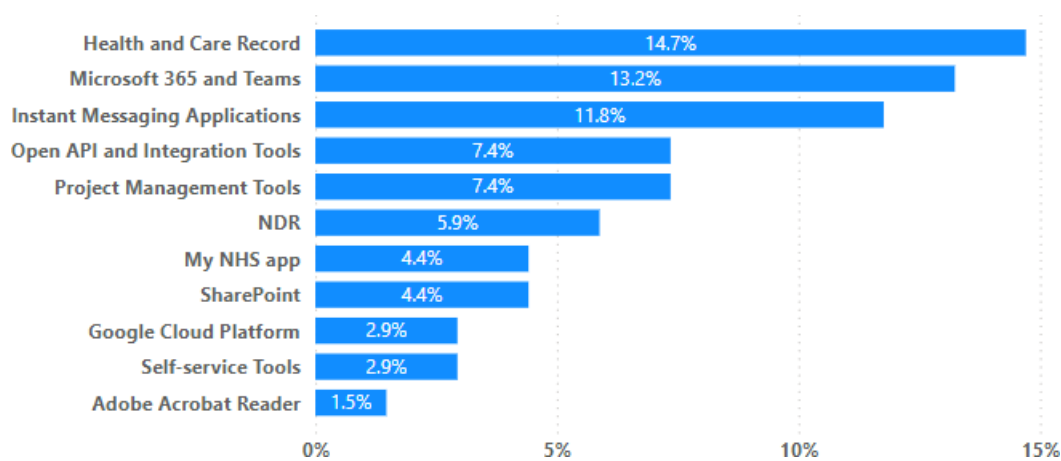


# Experience of working with DHCW is mixed

## Communication and collaboration challenges were highlighted



Q19. Overall, how would you describe your experience of working with DHCW? (n=287)



Categories derived from Q22: What tools or national digital applications could make it easier to work collaboratively with DHCW? (n=162)

From the survey, 34.8% of respondents rated their experience working with DHCW as fairly or very good, while 26.9% rated it as fairly or very poor, with 24.7% being neutral. Tools and national applications suggested to make collaboration easier included "Instant Messaging Applications" (11.8%) and "Project Management Tools" (7.4%), while clinical tools included a "Health & Care Record" (14.7%) and "Open API and integration tools" (7.4%).

Only 28.6% felt that DHCW's communication language was clear, while 31.1% found it unclear. Additionally, 38.8% found DHCW's communications inconsistent, and 38.6% rated DHCW as not responsive. Stakeholders attributed communication issues to DHCW's siloed working environment and a perceived "scattergun" communication strategy. A lack of transparency and reluctance to share information were recurring themes across the review.

In terms of collaboration, 43.2% of respondents found it challenging to work with DHCW, and 42.8% felt uninvolved in policy and strategy development. 50.4% believed DHCW did not understand their work, and 41.4% noted no cultural alignment efforts. Stakeholders felt DHCW lacked an understanding of their organisation's capacity and capability which led sometimes to a one-size fits all approach and missed opportunities for resource sharing across organisations. Sentiments were also shared that a more structured approach to collaboration was required with examples including more opportunities for joint planning and alignment.

"DHCW is perceived as a siloed organisation, with divisions operating independently rather than as a cohesive entity."

"There are a few incidents where the comms can feel a little bit scattergun."

# Looking forward

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# Recommendations & Actions

## Recommendation themes

Both the survey and interview asked respondents: 'What three recommendations would you give to DHCW for improving its engagement and collaborative working with stakeholders in the future?' Based on these responses, as well as the findings from the survey and interviews, six recommendation themes have been identified.

It should be noted that the sixth recommendation theme, 'Advance Interoperability & System Integration,' is a more technically-focused theme.

This has been retained to ensure stakeholders responses are reflected in the report, however, its contribution to addressing the primary objective of the review will require further consideration.

The following page provides an overview of the recommendation themes, including their priority based on stakeholders' primary roles within their organisation.

## Recommended actions

For each recommendation theme, recommended actions have been proposed to address the current challenges. These actions were derived from stakeholder suggestions and discussions with DHCW colleagues. All proposed actions were then prioritised in collaboration with DHCW and key actions identified.



# Recommendations have been grouped around six themes

Several recommended actions have been identified under each theme

Themes	<b>Foster Collaboration &amp; Partnership</b>	<b>Enhance Active Listening &amp; Responsiveness</b>	<b>Promote transparency &amp; effective communication</b>	<b>Clarity of Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b>	<b>Optimise Efficiency &amp; Simplify Processes</b>	<b>Advance Interoperability &amp; System Integration</b>
<b>Priority themes by stakeholder groups</b>	23% Health & Care Professional	19% Health & Care Professional	25% Health & Care Professional	11% Health & Care Professional	13% Health & Care Professional	9% Health & Care Professional
	27% Senior Leadership	25% Senior Leadership	17% Senior Leadership	15% Senior Leadership	10% Senior Leadership	6% Senior Leadership
	29% Management (Non-clinical)	20% Management (Non-clinical)	18% Management (Non-clinical)	14% Management (Non-clinical)	12% Management (Non-clinical)	7% Management (Non-clinical)
	29% Digital, Data & Technology	22% Digital, Data & Technology	15% Digital, Data & Technology	14% Digital, Data & Technology	15% Digital, Data & Technology	6% Digital, Data & Technology
<b>Recommended Actions</b>	(1.1) Ensure User Centred Design is adopted ●	(2.1) Soft Skills Training to Avoid Defensiveness ●	(3.1) Introduction Statement for DHCW Staff ●	(4.1) Define and Document DHCW's Organisation Governance ●	(5.1) Create access routes for stakeholders with business partner support for key stakeholders ●	(6.1) Utilise DHCW Buildings or in-person meetings/networking ●
	(1.2) Early Engagement of IG ●	(2.2) Establish a Stakeholder Advisory Group ●	(3.2) Transparent Decision-Making updates ●	(4.2) Define and Document DHCW's Role and Purpose in Onboarding Programme ●	(5.2) Accessible Organogram with contact details ●	(6.2) Pool of Specialist staff ●
	(1.3) Online Community of Practice Mapping ●●	(2.3) Knowledge Sharing Presentations ●●	(3.3) Enhance Stakeholder Newsletter ●	(4.3) FAQs to Address Common Queries ●		6.3) Give clinicians access to Innovation Labs ●●
	(1.4) Inter-organisational Coffee Mornings ●●	(2.4) Formal Rotation thorough Stakeholder Organisations ●●	(3.4) Visible Roadmap for each Programme & Services ●	(4.4) Define and Document DHCW's Role in Relation to other Organisations ●●		(6.4) Interoperability Task Force ●●
	(1.5) Joint Inter-organisational Award Submissions ●●		(3.5) High-level updates on Strategic Programmes & Services ●			
	(1.6) Conduct Stakeholder Mapping for all Programmes & Services ●●					
	(1.7) Joint Planning Sessions with Stakeholders ●●					
<b>Action owners</b>						
	● DHCW only ● System-wide					

# Key recommended actions

## These three actions should be prioritised by DHCW

After prioritising all the recommended actions within each recommendation theme, the following actions have been identified as the key focus areas for DHCW and should receive the most attention initially.

### Create access routes for stakeholders with business partner support for key stakeholders

**Recommendation Group:** Optimise Efficiency & Simply Processes

**Owners:** DHCW

**Beneficiaries:** All stakeholder organisations

**Description of action:**

Digital Business Partner roles are created to act as a strategic liaison between DHCW and key stakeholders. The primary responsibility of this role would be the stakeholder organisation’s front door into DHCW, helping stakeholders to navigate DHCW and to support the escalation process. They would also be responsible for ensuring that digital initiatives and strategic objectives align between DHCW and the stakeholder organisation (s) they are responsible for.

### Define and document DHCW’s role in relation to other organisations

**Recommendation Group:** Clarity of Roles & Responsibilities

**Owners:** DHCW & stakeholder organisations

**Beneficiaries:** All stakeholder organisations

**Description of action:**

DHCW presents a concise overview of what its role is and what it is not. This could be in the form of slide deck or animation – see [Kings Fund example](#).

Stakeholders have suggested this could further enhanced by indicating which organisation does provide that function. In accordance with the other recommendations, it is advised this be developed in partnership with the other national organisations.

### Conduct Stakeholder Mapping for all programmes & services

**Recommendation Group:** Foster Collaboration & Partnership

**Owners:** DHCW & stakeholder organisations

**Beneficiaries:** All stakeholder organisations







**Description of action:**

It is proposed that a concerted effort is made to include a representative from each relevant stakeholder organisation. This can be further refined by undertaking a stakeholder mapping in consultation with stakeholder organisations to identify the correct individuals to be involved. There is also a requirement that these identified/ selected individuals understand, if not clear, who they are representing – this will be more important for those individuals who hold multiple roles.

# Conclusion & Implications

The findings of this mixed methods stakeholder review provide a comprehensive understanding of stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of working with DHCW. While there are notable strengths, such as technical expertise, staff attributes, and crisis response capabilities; areas for improvement have been identified.

Six recommendation themes have been identified from this stakeholder review and are summarised below :

-  **Promote Transparency & Effective Communication** – will ensure clear, consistent, and transparent messaging, addressing gaps in both formal and ad-hoc communication channels.
-  **Foster Collaboration & Partnership** – will involve stakeholders earlier in the process and improve understanding the specific needs and work of different organisations.
-  **Enhance Active Listening & Responsiveness** - will help DHCW better address stakeholder concerns and feedback.
-  **Clarity of Roles & Responsibilities** - will reduce confusion around the role of DHCW and reduce ambiguity around responsibilities within the health and care system.
-  **Optimise Efficiency & Simplify Processes** - will streamline operations, processes and improve service delivery.
-  **Advance Interoperability & System Integration** - will enhance the overall effectiveness of digital and data services within Wales.

By addressing the recommendation themes with the prioritised recommended actions identified in this review, DHCW can continue to develop their approach to collaborative working with stakeholders. This will ultimately contribute towards better digital and data services for health and care professionals and the people of Wales.

# Appendix A – Methodology

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# Methodology (1/2)



## Sample characteristics

A broad range of stakeholders was targeted for this review with a purposive sampling approach adopted for the survey and a list of interviewees developed in collaboration with colleagues across DHCW.

## Data collection approaches

A mixed methods approach was adopted with both the survey and interviews ran concurrently over a six-week period during the months of May and June 2024.

### Online survey

An online survey was administered through Microsoft Forms. The survey link was cascaded to all stakeholders in accordance with communications strategy developed for the review. To optimise response rate, a cover email from the CEO of DHCW accompanied the survey link and during the six-week data collection phase additional email reminders were cascaded.

### Semi-structured interviews

Atos conducted interviews with 30 senior stakeholders from a diverse range of DHCW stakeholder organisations. All semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams and were approximately 45 minutes in duration. Recording of interviews was undertaken with permission of the interviewee to support accuracy of the analysis.

Responses to both the survey and interviews remained anonymous.

# Methodology (2/2)



## Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted independently by member of the Atos team

### Quantitative data

All quantitative data was transferred to Microsoft Power BI for analysis. Following data review and cleansing, the pre-determined data analysis plan was implemented. Assumptions around missing values were checked and validated, and determined the missing values were not related to the other observed data points. Subsequently, a pairwise deletion approach was adopted, and individual question totals clearly shown on the report. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics; no statistical hypothesis testing was conducted. A pre-determined, secondary analysis was conducted to explore how responses to certain survey questions influenced answers to others; notable trends and findings are presented in the report.

### Qualitative data & free text responses.

Qualitative data from the interviews and free text questions from the survey were analysed using thematic analysis using a matrix in Microsoft Excel. A six-stage framework, proposed by Braun & Clarke 2005)\*, was used to identify themes and to categorise responses for reporting.

\*Braun, V., Clarke, V.: Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qual. Res. Psychol. 3(2), 77-101 (2006)

For more information please contact:

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