

These notes provide a summary of discussions and are not an official or verbatim record of the meeting. These have not been shared with or cleared by Welsh Government colleagues.

Virtual Teams Meeting of Chief Executives

Friday 1 May 2020

Chaired: by Dr Chris Llewelyn

Chief Executives Alison Ward (AW) Annwen Morgan (AM) Beverly Owen (BO) Caroline Turner (CT) Chris Bradshaw (CB) Christina Harrhy (CH) Colin Everett (CE) Dilwyn Williams (DW) Eifion Evans (EE) Ellis Cooper (EC) Ian Bancroft (IB) Ian Westley (IW) Iwan Davies (ID) Mark Sheppard (MS) Michelle Morris (MM) Paul Matthews (PM) Paul Orders (PO) Phil Roberts (PR) Rob Thomas (RT) Sioned Wyn Davies (SD) Steven Philips (PD) Wendy Thomas (WT) Wendy Walters (WW)	WLGA Officials Chris Llewelyn (CLI) <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 20px; text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">NR</div> External Officials Shan Morgan, WG Tracey Burke, WG Andrew Slade, WG Desmond Clifford, WG Andrew Goodall, NHS Wales Reg Kilpatrick, WG WLGA Observers/Officers <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 20px; text-align: center; margin: 10px 0;">NR</div>
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NOTES FROM TEAMS CHAT COPIED AND PASTED AT FOOT OF NOTES

Welcome & Introduction - Chris Llewelyn, WLGA Chief Executive

Although there are discussions to have on additional revenue, lost income and the continuing pressures that LAs face, it is also important to highlight some of the positive work that is occurring despite the crisis. Such as the continued delivery of services and how we are all adapting to the new ways of working. WG have been high in their praise of the work that LAs are doing, and today the Minister Ken Skates mentioned the success of LAs in delivering the business grants, because as of today 43,000 people have claimed, and this in total is £540 million. This is an example of successful working between LAs and WG. There are lots of other examples, but in general the speed at which LAs are collaborating and reacting has been very impressive. Today we will be looking at recovery, and how we envision Wales as we come out of lockdown.

Welsh Government & National Health Wales Update:

Update from Dame Shan Morgan - Permanent Secretary

- Welsh Government been impressed with the speed in which LAs have mobilised in the last few weeks, particularly after flooding response. Welsh Government has also had to adapt rapidly and overcome the challenges on how to

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approach the effects on businesses, communities and vulnerable people. And the rolling out of PPE and testing has been a huge logistical exercise. WG aware that none of this could have been done without LAs.

- One of the lessons WG has learnt in the last few weeks is that it should have been more open with LAs with some of the early discussions on policy, and in future they will work on this and engage more fully. Been a steep learning curve.
- WG is aware not near the end of the crisis. The First Minister has been clear that we need to be careful about how we relax measures and that we cannot afford another peak in cases, but at the same time we need to look at how we provide hope and a positive way forward. Recovery is starting to be a focus, but it is important to remember that we are still in the response phase.
- WG envision recovery to have a number of stages. Currently WG is thinking about how we get the economy going again and create jobs, and when do we restart important work that has been put on hold. Along with that, WG will also look at what lessons can be learnt from this experience and what do we take forward in the future.
- WG is happy to work with LAs on recovery and feel that it is an ongoing conversation. The Counsel General will be holding initial round table discussion on recovery. WG are looking to work closely on this with LAs to benefit from their experiences.

Update from Desmond Clifford - Director General for the Office of the First Minister and Brexit

- Provide services around the First Minister, and work on Cabinet Business, which is currently mainly working on Covid-19. In regular discussions with WLGA Leader Cllr Morgan who is a fixture at the Ministerial core group, and he feeds in LAs' viewpoint.
- Also have a communications team which currently works 24/7 to keep up with the rapid information coming out on Covid-19. It has proved to be valuable tool with the public.
- On regulations and guidance, they are working closely with legal teams to keep them up to date. They have a legal obligation to keep the regulations under review and amend them where necessary.
- Covid-19 obviously dominating government business currently, however, WG is still in discussion with UK Government on Brexit, as it looks like they still want to keep to their deadline at the end of the year.
- The team is also looking at what the recovery issues will be and how WG and LAs forge ahead together.

Update from Andrew Goodall - Director General for Health and Social Services & Chief Executive, NHS Wales

- Some concerns raised recently about whether all the preparation has been needed. And WG took steps that were in line with what modelling was showing, and from what we were seeing in Italy at that time. It is because compliance in Wales has been strong that we are not seeing some of the higher cases that were speculated. It is also important to remember that it is not over yet, and we do want to avoid a second peak.
- Because of preparations we do have a more stable outlook, as we have capacity in the NHS, and field hospitals can still be used if we see another rise in cases or

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they can be used for another purpose. Currently we seem to have mitigated the first peak as Hospital admittance is reducing along with deaths.

- With testing, WG is looking at fixing the existing system, to make sure the capacity is there. They are also pushing to a community surveillance model. LAs will have sight of documentation within hours of the discussions. Feedback on documentation from LAs is welcome.
- PPE system is not perfect, but it is in a better place. Initial issues have been logistical, as they were not expecting to have to distribute on such a scale.
- Care homes seen as an extension of the hospital system. A lot more work needs to be done on focusing on this area, for testing and sector resilience.
- WG is looking at the NHS exit strategy on how it recovers and how we normalise businesses around care more broadly.
- Thinks it is key to hold onto some of the new ways of working, as we have managed to transform services in a matter of weeks.

Update from Andrew Slade - Director for Economy Skills & Natural Resources

- Focus on critical national infrastructure such as energy, telecoms, water and food supply, also work on supporting procurement of PPE and work on the economic response.
- Other areas where they are also working currently because of the crisis include tourism, higher education, skills for furloughed staff, and non-payment of utilities.
- On steps for recovery, WG is working with the UK Government and other partners on safe working practices, and on how to get the transport system going again.
- It is important to hang onto any good practice that has come from this experience and take it forward. Such as encouraging working from home to reduce emissions and reduce traffic. This will also all have to be tied into Brexit. Which could have profound consequences if not adequately planned for.

Update from Tracey Burke - Director General for Education & Public Services

- Worked together with LAs to address a range of issues around education.
- With housing there are a number of issues they have worked on. This includes issues around the renting sector. They have taken actions to assist rough sleepers. They have also tried to deal with the issues around caravan parks and second homes. And they seek to progress their work on the issues around prisoners. Although, all of these remain testing issues.
- They have also worked on the capacity that LAs have to help vulnerable people, and the information that LAs have shared on this has been incredibly useful.

Update from Reg Kilpatrick - Director for Local Government

- Recovery is a process not an event, but there will be key events to work through.
- His team is leading on the 21-day reviews, which is the process by which the Ministers go through to see if regulations in the Covid-19 Act need to continue. It is complex work as they try to balance recovery with health issues. A draft document will be out, and they are keen to share it with LAs for their opinions.

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- WG are also in conversation with UK Government on lockdown measures and where we go next.
- They also want to put protocols in place for businesses starting back up, so that they can do so in a measured way that inspires the confidence of the public. They are looking at this for recycling centres, and they would like a nomination of a contact they can discuss this with for libraries.
 - **ACTION: Nomination for someone to provide WG advice on libraries**

(CLI) Thanked WG & NHW for their contributions and for the work they are doing. In relation to Tracey's comments, we are working very closely with other colleagues in the Education Team Steve Davies and Albert Heaney. Requesting CE's colleagues to use the chat function on Microsoft Teams to indicate further questions.

- **(Colin)** Listening carefully to the advice, particularly to Andrew's advice on the risks of surge happening on several occasion for a long period, we need a new phrasebook for contingency planning. We use the word recovery, but we are likely to be running response recovery in parallel, possibly a year. If we use recovery in the public, the public, might get a mis-impression.

North Wales have a better understanding of the 'Modelling' and have partners to deliver this locally. We need to be able to influence Jeremy Miles' work, and a phased medium-term parallel response and recovery plan. Secondly, we need to recognise the point of the LRF/SCG's hand over, to a form of recovery phase, as it is local authorities assigned to lead recovery.

Not a criticism, we need to understand the recovery response thinking has a huge health bias, we need to extend that thinking now, in three big areas: (i) resilient sustainable integrated Health & Social Care system, with major transformation opportunities (ii) Community recovery to include; Poverty and welfare and (iii) Economic stimulus at a regional level. We need to think more strategically, realistically with a long-term gain to get back into a better position.

North Wales group will produce another thinking paper on the back of a conversation they had with Reg Kilpatrick.

- **(Steve)** Previous speakers have covered the issues in relation to RSG and the process that is in place between WG & LG. We should not lose sight of the fact that chief executives and Section 151 officers have statutory responsibilities; and we are in unprecedented times, we had to take measures very quickly, we are spending a lot of money very quickly and the projections suggest that is not sustainable for another 3-6 months, perhaps less. No easy answer.

Welsh Government have constraints that they have to work under and suspect that this is a debate to have with UK Government. Also concerned at the phraseology of some of the letters we have received from Ministers, which talk frequently about expectations. We have strategic duties to adhere to and the Auditor General, prior to the lockdown, has done a series of studies of the

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financial sustainability of local authorities and used a number of benchmarks; these are now out of date. We need to have a collaborative and transparent debate, as some authorities are speculating about issuing Section 114 notices. Not expecting answers now but wanted flag in the context of statutory responsibilities.

- **(Ian W)** Is there a national view emerging on any additional payments for frontline workers?; we note that there are different views taken between Welsh & UK Governments, regarding testing of care home residents; and issues on SEN regulations and expectation that Children with statements of SEN should still have everything that is written in the statement, but we still have a different approach taken to colleagues in England as a consequence of the UK Guidance; finally with regards to the Welsh Government framework for recovery leading Wales into the corona virus paramedic, we have formed a view, that it has a heavy focus on Health and would interested to know the plans for economic recovery.
- **(Annwen)**, As for the x6 Chief Executives in North Wales, other colleagues have covered the key questions, however to reiterate some points: when will WG look at the RSG grants, and are they going to review the RSG grants as a whole? The recovery paper; Colin has taken that discussion forward. Other issues, more details required relating to the guidance on furloughing staff, and on recycling centres.
- **(Christina)** We expect that there has been a lot of work that has been carried out with 'Testing' in recent weeks, but we are still not there as Andrew has alluded to, and locally we are experiencing sufficient delays in receiving the test results; and also worrying governance issues in terms of information that we are receiving and; we shouldn't be receiving. Seeking reassurance that this being addressed urgently. Looking at the recovery plan at a wider context, our concerns were around getting that up and running and having a robust platform that we can build on.
- **(Alison)** As local government representative on the PHW Board, apology for the consultation period being short, and that we could be coming out of lockdown in some form within a matter of weeks, and colleagues in PHW only finished writing the report on the weekend, but the main issue to raise is the conversations we are having, emphasised both Chair & Chief Executive that they see local government as leading the local implementation of this plan on the ground, not health, but there will be a Public Health Wales National approach and PHW Board will be involved. They are very much looking to us, as community and local leaders. There is a question SCG/LRF framework is strong enough in governance terms to manage this and will have to think further governance around the regional part, being able to direct the local part SCG's have no power to direct anyone. Everybody is open to it, and really wants local government to be a lead partner.
- **(Andrew Goodall)** A Welsh structure was not in place to have a laboratory system in place in the whole of Wales at an operational level with distribution centres, drive-thru and community testing units, we were not thinking in these terms and number of weeks ago, in respect of everybody trying

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understand what this virus meant, we have had countries having to work through their different approaches, let alone Welsh context, but will expect that there are still operational issues to be sorted out, to take sure that laboratory capacity is increased and that will increase. We know that we have tried to use the SCG/LRF mechanisms better, the drive-thru's have settled in, we got two additional in operation this week and looking at the Merthyr site. The Military assessment that has been taking place along side this has been important because this is still not stream-lined, and results should be coming back much more quickly.

The concerns in the Gwent LRF mechanisms will be picked up, to find a way to respond. With regards to the care homes testing which had been raised, we have been adapting the care home environment based on the evidence and making progress, it is not fixed, but have to being trying to make sure that we do based it on both science for all time, but we have to complement it, with expectation from the system for confidence. We have changed the approach, including, wanting patients to be tested before they are discharged back to care homes, but there will be further progressive Guidance that comes out, which the Minister has signed-off, in response to the concerns within the system. Keen to openly share England's statement approach, which is not described publicly. Our Welsh approach is not delivering, it is very close to the line to have the scientific discussion happening across the four nations and we can be a bit clearer. Committed to share the information once the Minister has made the announcement.

- **(Paul M)** So far, we have talked about two R's, response and recovery, and on the ground we are still living on response and is nervous people running to recovery before we are ready. Concerned that we could easily drive ourselves in a second/third peak. There is a 3rd R which people are not talking about, which recession. The world view that we are likely to travel into significant recession - what thinking are we developing around how we deal with that situation in Wales, and how is WG thinking of involving LG in conversations, not only as employers, but as significant stakeholders in local economies. The other issue to flag all your domestic care key workers has just got a £500 pay award. It is going to cost £32m that gives CEs and councils a nightmare to manage, and will have to run conversations on a narrative, have some flexibility, move as one, do what need to be done and treat everybody with dignity, courtesy, respect with consistency.
- The policy issue is one of recession and would like to be aware on what Wales is thinking; the secondary issue these statements have come from nowhere, this is not the best use of £32m in local government. There are more of us that have Section 114 as part of our vocabulary, this morning's event has probably disturbed us a bit more.
- The general consensus was that the meeting was very worthwhile and future meetings should be organised.

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CB

Bradshaw, Christopher 01/05 12:52

Some of WG's functions have been shown to be ineffective in this pandemic and have/are requiring councils to bale them out. Is there going to be a thorough review of the future functions of WG and whether a range of services should be transferred to LG in Wales?

AG

Goodall, Andrew (HSS - DG - NHS Wales Chief Executive) 01/05 13:11

Chris i think we have a lot of reflections to make together -i think we have a combination of the good, the bad and ugly from our different perspectives - WG has had to move to more intervention alongside the system , than just policy development and oversight, so some new experiences - one of the things we need to think on is some of the trickier partnership moments local and national (our foundations should be there however) and one area i think took time to settle in was LRF/SCG roles? yet they would normally be prominent in an emergency response. However, we have also been responding to extraordinary circumstances 1/100 years pandemic and should at least acknowledge that.

PM

Matthews, Paul 01/05 13:14

andrew

AG

Goodall, Andrew (HSS - DG - NHS Wales Chief Executive) 01/05 13:15

i think originally we expected an 8-12 week peak building up - i agree colin this is more sustained and a progressive ongoing approach with steps forward 9and possibly back)

PM

Matthews, Paul 01/05 13:15

andrew - ive just seen the £500 announcement on payments to Dom Care workers - this is going to present you with a hell of a problem when your NHS colleagues ask for parity

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RK

Kilpatrick, Reg (EPS - LG Director) 01/05 13:16
PArt of the Jeremy Miles' continuity and recovery portfolio work ToR requires the involvement of partners - the police and fire have made the same point. We are very early in our thinking but partners are at the top of our agenda.

AG

Goodall, Andrew (HSS - DG - NHS Wales Chief Executive) 01/05 13:16
we still hope vaccination and treatments will emerge but reality is that is to a 12 month timetable

CE

Colin E 01/05 13:18
Agree Andrew - this is a one year medium term plan to start with.

Can we model a phased response/recovery approach based on the WG 2.3 surge data model - with steps and timelines. Which services such as libraries would fall in which step, in the case of libraries to help with social isolation? We need to plan ahead, now.

RK

Kilpatrick, Reg (EPS - LG Director) 01/05 13:22
Steve - agree. We are acutely aware of these issues and the potential for a challenging end year. Judith and SWT are working on this.

AW

Ward, Alison 01/05 13:23
Chris - Can I come in on the PHW plan?

EE

Eifion Evans 01/05 13:27
The PHW plan needs to address data sharing protocols urgently. It may well require new / revised legislation

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TB

Burke, Tracey (EPS - Director General) 01/05 13:28

On the SEN point raised, will be aware of the announcement by SoS for Education in UK Government last night. As I type, we are working with lawyers to determine the best approach in Wales. Am aware of the concerns of local government and we will keep your Directors of Education up to date on developments on this and other regs. Tracey

CE

Colin E 01/05 13:28

Finance - some of us have warned over the past 2-3 years that we were on the verge of insolvency unless we sacrificed our resilience. If we had not stood our ground and protected our resilience then we would have gone under in the crisis. Long term sustainability of public sector funding is as key now as ever - perhaps local government will now again be valued.

SP

Steven Phillips 01/05 13:28

Reg: I acknowledge that. There are no easy answers; but the scale of financial gap is potentially enormous - and the estimates have more or less doubled in the last month. I think we must get to get common position by mid summer and the AGW has a role here too.

ID

Iwan Davies 01/05 13:29

Agreed Paul

CE

Colin E 01/05 13:31

Fully agree Paul. A PR exercise which will cause damage. When we were asked as employers, WG colleagues?

AS

Slade, Andrew (ESNR - Director General) 01/05 13:33

Paul - both happy and intending to follow up with all of you on long-term economic response (Ministers clear that this is key). Also links strongly to the Counsel General's wider work.

CE

Colin E 01/05 13:34

I agree on the third 'r'. My explanation was that we are in unknown territory of parallel response and recovery planning. The rule book was written for a single emergency event. We have no rule book here. We need to think creatively and together.

PR

Phil Roberts 01/05 13:35

Sorry, I have to leave. Only comment on PHW is that we need some specifics on the ask and will work with colleagues in the LHB and NPT to implement. It may have another additional cost

PM

Matthews, Paul 01/05 13:36

the counsel general may want to think about a council voice contributing to his round tables

CE

Colin E 01/05 13:38

Early engagement with 'recovery' leads within the SCGs would be a useful first step.

WW

Wendy S Walters 01/05 13:40

apologies, have to leave

AW

Ward, Alison 01/05 13:40

Phil - I don't think that anyone expects us to lead community tracing and the large number of people it will involve without it being properly resourced. We need to scope it first though.